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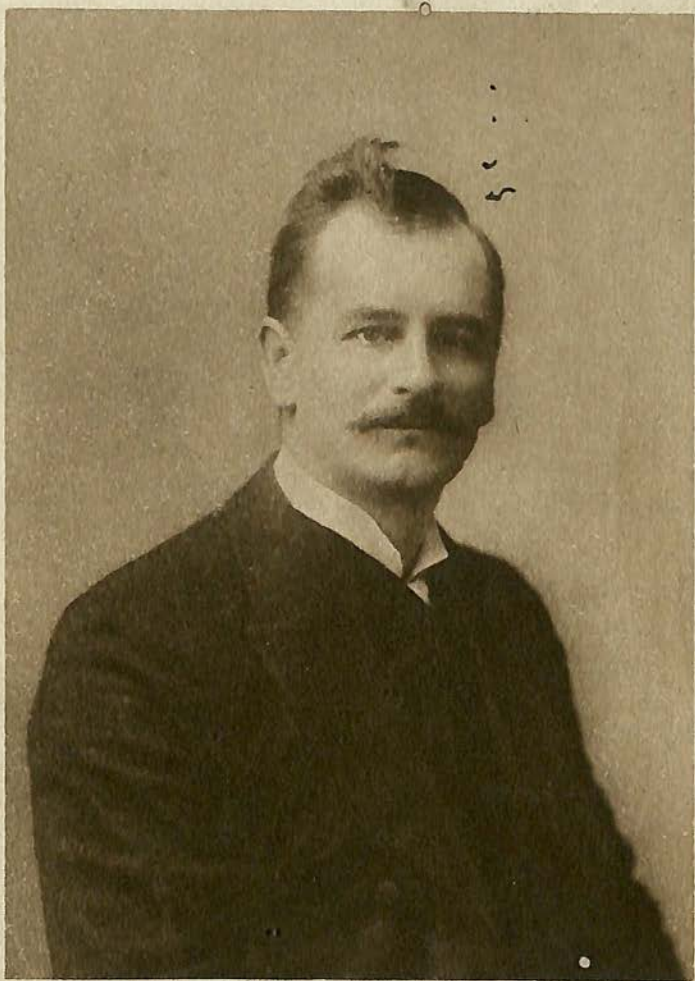
THE STORY OF MY CAPTIVITY



Adrian Hoffmeyer

London: Edward Arnold. 1900.

THE STORY OF MY CAPTIVITY

DURING THE TRANSVAAL WAR

1899–1900

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BY

ADRIAN HOFMEYR

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Dedicated

WITH SINCERE AFFECTION

AND HEARTFELT GRATITUDE TO THE

BRITISH OFFICERS

MY FELLOW-PRISONERS OF WAR

PREFACE

JUST a word to the reader. The greater part of my "Story" was written in prison. One feels then more keenly and poignantly, and suffers more acutely. I have given vent to such feelings, and this will account for many seemingly hard words. Will the kind reader please remember this? Now that I am free I cherish no hard thoughts; I have forgotten all indignity heaped upon me. To pacify, to conciliate the genuine Boer, whom I love and respect, I would do anything. My ardent desire is that he, too, soon may experience the inestimable advantages of a beneficent British rule, as we all do in the Cape Colony. What a grand, happy country South Africa then will be—the brightest jewel in our gracious sovereign's crown.

May I live to see my dream realised!

ADRIAN HOFMEYR.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	MY POSITION WITH REGARD TO THE WAR	1
II.	THE FIRST DAYS OF THE WAR	5
III.	THE FATEFUL SUNDAY, OCTOBER 15, 1899	10
IV.	MORE ABOUT THAT SUNDAY	18
V.	ANOTHER EVENTFUL DAY	23
VI.	MAGNA EST VERITAS ET PREVALEBIT	28
VII.	IN A PRISON	33
VIII.	THE FIRST WEEK	42
IX.	HARRY'S EXPERIENCES	50
X.	THE MAN AND THE WOMAN	58
XI.	DAILY ROUTINE IN PRISON	63
XII.	TRAITORS	69
XIII.	SOME EPISODES—LUDICROUS AND DISGRACEFUL	76
XIV.	SOME MORE OF THE SAME KIND	88
XV.	ALL PRIVILEGES CURTAILED	94
XVI.	IN HOSPITAL	103
XVII.	THE JOURNEY TO PRETORIA	108

CHAPTER		PAGE
XVIII.	THE STAATS MODEL SCHOOL	116
XIX.	SUNDAY	123
XX.	AN ESCAPE	131
XXI.	OUR TIME OF TRIBULATION—AND AFTER!	141
XXII.	THE ZARP	149
XXIII.	DEAD	158
XXIV.	WAS IT A MISTAKE?	164
XXV.	NO DOUBT ABOUT THE FOLLOWING MISTAKES, HOWEVER!	172
XXVI.	THE BIGGEST MISTAKE OF ALL	181
XXVII.	ANOTHER FALSE STEP!	186
XXVIII.	MAJUBA DAY—1900	191
XXIX.	AND AFTER	198
XXX.	A LAST CHANCE	214
XXXI.	ANOTHER ESCAPE	221
XXXII.	OUR GREAT TREK	229
XXXIII.	A LOST CHANCE	238
XXXIV.	IN THE CATACOMBS	246
XXV.	OUR INFORMATION BUREAU	256
XXXVI.	THE BRITISH OFFICER AND HIS PASTIME	272
XXXVII.	FREE	281
XXXVIII.	AFTERWARDS	290
XXXIX.	CONCLUSION	300

ILLUSTRATIONS

PORTRAIT OF THE AUTHOR . . . *Frontispiece*

THE AUTHOR IN PRISON AT PRETORIA . *To face page* 1

INTRODUCTORY

WHEN the Transvaal War broke out, October 11, 1899, I happened to be at Lobatsi, in British Bechuanaland, a small railway station on the Buluwayo line, fifty miles north of Mafeking. I was on my way to Lake 'N Gami to visit the trekkers who had settled there since 1894. I was travelling by bullock wagon, accompanied by my young friend Harry Neethling and four Kaffir servants. We were well provisioned, and had sixteen bullocks and two riding horses. I delayed at Lobatsi a couple of weeks waiting for the drought to break up before crossing the dreaded Kalihari. All of a sudden, to our intense surprise, we heard of the Transvaal Ultimatum, and a few hours later of the declaration of war. We had seen and heard of commandos gathering and preparations going on apace, yet no one expected war—at all events

not so soon. A couple of white families were living at the station, and round about some hundreds of Kaffirs. When rumours of war became rife, most of the women and children left. Thus it happened that on the fateful 11th only a hospital nurse and the manageress of the hotel were at the station. Lieutenant Cole with twenty-five men and two B. S. A. police constituted the strength of the garrison. This was the position on Thursday morning, the 12th, when news of the declaration of war reached us. Let me take up the tale from there.

My little corner in the Staats Model School—8 feet by 6 feet—in a room occupied by eight officers. Kaffir blankets make a good tablecloth and carpet, and an umbrella-stand upside down a bookcase. The table I bought, and the flowers my sister sent me.

THE STORY OF MY CAPTIVITY

CHAPTER I

MY POSITION WITH REGARD TO THE WAR

I HAPPENED to be one of those colonial-born Africanders who believed that the Transvaal ought to have given in to the demand for a *five* years' franchise. I could not see how that could have endangered Transvaal independence. I felt persuaded that a *refusal* to do so would *undermine* that independence. Why? Because, first of all, history teaches us that equal rights bestowed upon the inhabitants of a country never endanger such a country's safety. And secondly, because it is unnatural to expect a majority to consent to the supremacy of a minority. Wherever a minority rules it tyrannises, and when that takes place the fires of dissatisfaction are always smouldering, and sooner or later civil war ensues. I feared this for the Transvaal. I felt assured that giving in to the Uitlanders' *just* claims (all were not just) would be

a masterstroke of policy. And, therefore, I advocated the "climb down" on the Kimberley and Beaconsfield platforms in the month of July. I then said that I knew I would be made to suffer for my opinions. I never dreamt, however, what horrors of vengeance awaited me. But more. The above being my humble view on the matter, I, all the same, was decidedly averse to the idea of having recourse to arms. In conversation with Sir Alfred Milner and the leaders of the "Progressives" in the Colony, I made bold to urge patience. In public and private I strenuously urged it. My devout wish was that England would resort to no other arms than diplomatic ones. Let it take three, six, nine, twelve months—never mind. Be patient—all will eventually come right. For this I pleaded. I begged our leaders to remember that climbing down is always hard work, and that therefore we ought to sympathise with Paul Kruger. Give him time, act courteously, use every available weapon of diplomacy—only, *no war!* This was my honest opinion—to realise it, I spoke and wrote and did what I could. Imagine then my horror when I heard that the *Transvaal* had sent an ultimatum! I knew what this meant. It meant burning the boats behind them; it meant seizing hold of their one opportunity of striking a blow at

the Empire—their only one. Thus were my hopes dashed to the ground, and the dreaded war was upon us. I verily believe, to-day still, that there would have been no war, if the *Transvaal had not* declared it. If the Imperial authorities had any such idea they would have flooded the Cape with troops long before. No, their hope too was, I am sure, that diplomacy would gain the day. Alas! the unwise Ultimatum dashed all such hopes to the ground. As an Africander, born and bred, I shuddered at the very thought of such a war. But as a *loyal Africander* I did not consider it compatible with my duty to my Queen to give any one reason to think that by word or deed I egged on any one in the Transvaal to persist in refusal of the demanded reform. I make bold to say that if all the Africander friends of the Transvaal had acted thus, had dissuaded the authorities from persevering in their headstrong policy, instead of allowing them to think that all the Colonial Africanders would fight for them in case of war, there would be no war to-day. No, their friends *would* tell them—"the Colonials will rise, European Powers will interfere, America is sure to help you, &c.—don't give in." And they did not. But scarcely any Colonials have risen, no European voice is heard, and America remembers England's loyal

attitude to her during the Spanish War. Oh, the pity of it all! Things might have been so different. And now, what will the end be? I am writing this in prison—I cannot foretell. I must wait! I only know this, the British arms will triumph.

CHAPTER II

THE FIRST DAYS OF THE WAR

WHEN on Wednesday we heard a vague rumour that an ultimatum had been sent by the Transvaal, we were naturally greatly excited. The question debated was, What shall we do? The hospital nurse was anxious to get to Mafeking, so also the manageress of the hotel, to help nursing there. I intended going back to the Cape myself. Unfortunately, on that very day the trains ceased running both southward and northward. I decided then to send my young friend Harry on horseback to the Boer commando, ten miles off, to ascertain, if possible, definite news. At ten in the morning he rode off. How the day dragged on! We could obtain no definite news, and in the absence thereof we could not decide definitely what to do. Being a *Times* correspondent, as also of the *Cape Times*, I spent a great part of the day in writing to these

papers and also some letters. How to get these communications away, however, I had no idea. I remember that I felt low-spirited. Writing to a friend on business matters, I said, "If anything happens to me, do this, &c., please." I knew the Transvaal Government hated me for daring to differ from them. I knew that that particular Hollander element which swayed the Government counsels, was a particularly narrow-minded one, vengeful and spiteful—an element which believed that it could only prove its true love for the Transvaal by exhibiting excessive bigotry of zeal against its enemies—by out-Heroding Herod, in fact. I knew that though I was a nobody, not even a public politician, it would make no difference. Little things delight little minds: they would simply delight in taking me, aye, and even shooting me, a nonentity, as if I were some great political power or military commander. After-events justified my opinion.

Evening came, but no Harry. Imagine my anxiety. Late that night I sat up writing in my lonely hut. A gloom was cast over all of us. About eight o'clock Thursday morning a Kaffir came up to my hut with a letter from Harry. He wrote that he had arrived at the "lager" of Commandant Swarts' company, but found him out,

that his *locum tenens* had received him kindly, but detained him till Swarts' return, and that on Thursday he would, therefore, be back again. He wrote under the sub-commander's instructions and at his dictation, amongst others, the following sentence: "Tell Mr. Hofmeyr that we do not intend to attack Lobatsi, and that women and children are quite safe." It will appear later with what a diabolical plan this was inserted. At twelve o'clock that same Thursday we received official intimation that war was declared. What now? In consequence of the contents of Harry's letter we felt quite safe, and decided to arrange for departure to Mafeking as soon as possible, whilst Lieutenant Cole, rightly judging that it would be useless to stay in a place which was not going to be attacked, evacuated Lobatsi that very same evening. Another lonely evening and night, for Harry had not yet returned—in fact, he never was allowed to come back. The Boer commander had deceived him and us purposely. Friday passed quietly. In vain we tried to hire oxen from the Kaffirs to take my wagon on to Mafeking, with those of us who were left there. My oxen I had sent away a few days previously to a sale, and that was the last I saw of them. On Saturday morning we found that the wires were cut a mile

north of Lobatsi, and three lengths of rail taken up.

The wires southward had been cut early on Friday morning. The stationmaster, the gangers, and myself immediately set to with a will and succeeded in restoring connection on one line. I got through one message to the *Times*, but could gain no further information—nothing was known northward of us, except vague rumours. A large body of Boers had come during the night to cut these wires, and whilst repairing the line I more than once expected that we would be fired upon from the surrounding hills, where they perhaps were in hiding. Nothing happened, however. My letters and communications I had sent on to Mafeking with two Kaffir boys. Whether they ever reached their destination I know not. We were anxious now to get away from Lobatsi, and had already decided to run down to Mafeking on a ganger's "trolley," when we heard from other gangers further down the line that it had been wrecked in several places. Perforce, therefore, we had to stay. That evening—Saturday evening—our whole Lobatsi population consisted of the two ladies, the stationmaster, a ganger (a Scotchman), his wife, her brother, and myself—seven whites all told—and one Kaffir boy. I sat out on the platform late that night. The air

was to me full of ominous forebodings. There was one saddle-horse, but how could I take it and escape, leaving the others? All seemed to look up to me for comfort and advice. It was a beautiful moonlight night. Aye, the thoughts, the hopes, the memories that crowded in on me! I *knew* something was going to take place. And yet I knew not what! I read Harry's letter again, and said to myself, "They won't come, we are safe; see, they were here last night, a mile off only; no, I can believe the message!" I was sorely mistaken, but knew it not. Long I sat there. I can still picture the glorious scene—all the country around, the bold hills and open plains bathed in gleaming moonlight, and all so calm and quiet. Only under the crags, down in the river, and under the trees dark, ominous shadows lay. Overhead the majestic moon and silvered sky breathed messages of rest and hope, around me the hyena's howl and jackal's screech warned me that enemies were nigh. It was a picture of peace and war! A great peace had fallen on me. I felt no fear, and it struck me how quiet and calm the others also were. There was no nervousness, no hysteria; no, it was the quietness of courage! Thus ended the week—the first days of the war.

CHAPTER III

THE FATEFUL SUNDAY, OCTOBER 15, 1899

CAN I ever forget that day—ever shut out its horrors? I was awake very early that morning, just as day broke. I went out, but not a sound. I went back to my room, to be startled a few minutes later by the report of a gun. Going out again, followed by some of the others, in a moment we heard the clatter of a horse's hoof, and up rode a man with a white flag. On his arrival he dismounted and came up, asking me if we intended to surrender or fight. With a smile I said, "Well, my friend, the stationmaster and I are the only men here—what think you, is it worth while fighting? How many men have you?" said I. "We have about eighty," said he. "Well, we are unarmed—what think you, shall I hold the fort, or surrender?" He understood my little pleasantry and signalled to the others to come up. He told me, too, that when that

shot was fired the whole commando had just drawn up in the river before the hotel, and when I came out on the platform they were on the point of firing on me, thinking they were going to be attacked. But as no more shots were heard they desisted. This was my first escape that day.

Up thundered the eighty horsemen now. The Commanders, Swarts and Potgieter, came up and asked for the keys of the station, &c. I met with dark looks all round, and felt that they were satisfied at the success of the trap they had laid for me. To wreak a petty vengeance they had plotted to capture me, and now they had me—one against eighty—a defenceless man, too. I remembered all their pious talk in their newspapers—papers which otherwise had no respect at all for religion. I remembered their story of the President's three days' prayer, locked up in his room. I remembered their boast that they never fight on a Sunday. And so, in my indignation, I said to the Commander, "I thought you do not fight or make war on Sundays?" "No," said he, "we don't as a rule, but orders are orders." "Oh," said I, "the orders of man are more than the orders of God?" My noble warrior fell into the trap, and said, "Yes, in time of war!" And I began to understand how much these religious protestations were worth.

All was bustle and confusion now all over the station and the hotel. The ladies made coffee and breakfast for as many as possible, and the commanders held consultations. A trench had been dug some weeks before all along the rails, to drain off the rain-water, and during the digging process an old bit of dynamite fuse, buried under ground—who knows how long before—had been cut in two by the diggers' spades. A length of a couple of inches protruded from the side of this trench. This bit of fuse was spotted by one of the burghers, who reported it to the commander. What a scare it created! Immediately a guard was placed to warn every one off the spot, and terrible was their rage and deep their curses. Of course they concluded we had laid a mine to blow them up! I assured the men that it was not so. No use. "That's the accursed Englishman all over—he can't hit us with the rifle, now he wants to blow us up with dynamite." To prove that they were mistaken I suggested they should all withdraw to some distance, leaving me alone to fire the fuse. This ought to have shown them that they were mistaken, but no one was generous enough to acknowledge it. Indeed, one cowardly fellow cried out, "Don't trust the verd . . . verrader (the d . . . traitor); he has some other plan." And so they made a pretence all that

day of guarding the reputed mine, just to show the stationmaster and myself that they did not believe us.

I said above that the leaders were holding a consultation and overhauling the station papers. During this time I had a bath and dressed myself, being guarded all the while. To my astonishment I found that my guards—all honest patriots—were purloining everything of mine they could lay hands on unseen. Thus I found my beautiful gold watch, a valuable hunting-belt, gold links, &c., gone, when I re-entered my room. And of course no one had ever seen these! Oh no! And such good fellows don't tell lies!

When finished, I appeared on the platform again, to find every one scowling at me. Mutterings and murmurings were heard on every side. I transcribe some literally, as I jotted them down at the time. "This is the man who made that disgraceful speech at Kimberley." "He is the traitor who wired those cables all over the world." "He told his hated Government that we were massing on the border."

What caused this sudden access of anger, I wondered? I sat down under the verandah and watched. I soon found out. With a pale, scared face Nurse Ruth came up and said: "Mr. H.,

they've seen the copies of your wires in the office; they know now you are a correspondent, and they are going to shoot you." And bursting into tears the kind-hearted nurse fled to her room. Imagine my sensations! I felt stunned, and had only begun to realise somewhat what was awaiting me when the stationmaster managed to get close beside me and whisper, "What a fool I was not to destroy the wires in the office! They know of the armoured train coming from the north, of which I was advised, and also of *your* wires; and . . . Mr. H., the commander told me they were going to shoot you!" "In cold blood?" said I. "Yes, just now!" He was called away then, and what passed through my mind I can only leave the reader to imagine. There I saw before me on the railway platform eager groups talking and gesticulating fiercely. The first and second in command, Swarts and Potgieter, were close to me, some ten yards off, talking to an excited group. I could hear snatches of what was going on, especially the horrible curses flung at me. "Schiet hom dat hy vrek" ("Shoot him dead") said one. "We'll teach him to follow the English, and not stand by us Africanders!" &c. I felt sure now that my doom was sealed. Their scowling looks, the way they handled their rifles, their words—all proved it, besides what my friends

had whispered to me. I was to die because I was *loyal*, and would not turn *traitor*. And these poor men had been drilled into the idea that one could be an Africander only by being a Krugerite. They fought for independence, as they averred, by trying to make others dependent. So I really thought that I had but a few moments more to live. There was a pang of regret, a wistful look "over the hills and far away," a silent prayer for courage, and a quiet calm took possession of my soul. I felt that I was not afraid to die, though life was sweet. I remained sitting quietly. Furtive looks were cast my way continually. Oh, how I prayed for courage! How they would like to see me fall on my knees before them, howling for mercy! No, no, not that! O God! help me! help me to die as a brave man! Shooting me would be murdering me—that I knew. It would be an infringement of all international usage, for I was innocent and a non-combatant. But I had seen enough of these Commanders now to know that they were capable of doing it. My friends came out to me again, sad and sorrowful, as may be imagined. I told them I was ready and not afraid. Then that little meeting of the Commanders broke up, and they came towards me. "It has come," I thought. Just one more silent

prayer, and I stood up and walked to the entrance of the verandah to meet them.

They came with stern, set countenances and loaded rifles. Quietly and calmly I said, "Gentlemen, I am ready to die!" Oh, it was a horrible moment. I am not ashamed to say I felt as if my heart could break, but, thank God, outwardly I was quite calm. There was an ominous silence, and then the Commandant said: "We'll take you prisoner to Zeerust, and shoot you there; we won't shoot you now." I afterwards heard that this was the resolution come to by the narrow majority of one vote. The second in command was determined to shoot me then, and when outvoted he mounted his horse and rode off in a rage, with a large body of men, northward, to break up more of the railway line.

I then quietly asked: "Why am I taken prisoner?" The answer was a shuffling one: "It is our orders."

Behind my back, I was cursed and sworn at, and called traitor with ever so many adjectives thrown in. *To my face*, no one spoke out. Bullies are cowards! The real, honest Transvaal burgher—the thousands of them now fighting without pay, only out of patriotism—is no bully, and therefore no coward. Oh no; but those *Government minions*, lusting for loot, braggarts all—*they* were the bullies

and the cowards. Into their hands had I fallen. They could talk lofty patriotism by the hour, and yet send a treacherous message; they could make wonderful professions of honesty, and yet do a treacherous deed; they could talk of being civilised, and yet take women prisoners! I knew now that the danger of immediate death had passed by me, but I knew too I had tasted its bitterness. A scene of bustle ensued hereupon. The Boers dismantled the station, hotel, and stores, and we packed our few belongings. Lots of my clothes had by this time been stolen. The seven of us before referred to were now prisoners, and told to get ready to start for Zeerust soon. It was Sunday, day of peace, but there was none there. It was a beautifully clear day, but dark clouds hung over our lives; the sun was bright above us, but for me especially a blackness of darkest night had come—I was riding on to meet my death.

CHAPTER IV

MORE ABOUT THAT SUNDAY

AT about noon we started for Zeerust. My own wagon and several others were loaded with loot, and under escort of four mounted men the seven of us left. I was searched for revolvers or poison—of all things in the world! Soon we left Lobatsi behind us, on the way to the lager. I was a *prisoner* now, and began to realise the meaning of the word. Our wagon was very full, and packed by the Boers without any thought of providing comfort. The stationmaster and myself had to sit the whole three hours' journey in the broiling sun—from twelve to three o'clock. We arrived at the lager then, getting there a cup of tea, and eating some provisions we had brought with us. We here rearranged everything on our wagon so as to get a little more comfort for the ladies of the party.

I was greatly struck by the difference in treatment

we all, and I especially, experienced here at the hands of the burghers in the lager—those who had *not* taken part in the Lobatsi expedition. Those who had were of course still there. The lager was pitched at a place called "Schildpad" ("tortoise"), and all the men were most courteous to all of us. At Lobatsi all were scowling, and many a bitter word and curse were flung at me. Here every one was kind, and eagerly helped me to unload and reload the wagon. The Commandant, Swarts, had also joined us, having followed on horseback. He, too, was most courteous now, so much so that I was wondering what might have caused the change. When about to start he said to me—

"Mr. H., don't trouble yourself about anything. Your comfort will be well attended to at Zeerust. 'Tis much safer for you and all your party to be there now." To our escort he gave orders to take us to the hotel. He left me under the impression that we were really not prisoners, but were taken for protection. Alas, delusive hope! I did not know the man I had to do with. At the time I believed him; and so cheered we all felt, that when on the point of starting I thanked him and all the others, in the name of all our party, for their courtesy and kindness to us. More still. Belonging to the tent of my travelling wagon was a handy folding-table.

I had put it up for the party's use—there it was, standing before us. And now, since my trip to the interior had to be given up, I asked Swarts to accept of it as a present, a token of our gratitude for his courtesy *now* extended to us. The simple-minded (*sic*) warrior actually accepted of it and thanked us. And weeks afterwards, when I lay ill, sorely ill, in Zeerust gaol, and he was asked to give me parole on that account, the good Samaritan, who had listened to my words of thanks, who had accepted of my gift, gave answer and said, "Laat hem vrek" ("Let him die"). "Such men as he ought to be shot or sentenced to twenty years' imprisonment." Reader, I've given you a fair type of a Transvaal *Government minion!* Judge for yourself. The Boer, the real one, is a different man, however.

At about sunset on that Sunday we pursued the journey to Zeerust. I had arranged the front room of my comfortable travelling wagon for the use of the old ganger and his wife and her brother. The others occupied the room at the back. The station-master and myself occupied an outside seat. The weather was now very pleasant, and our spirits were comparatively buoyant again. Our escort consisted of four mounted men. Two, who were brothers, were young men of German descent, and had accompanied us from Lobatsi. They were better

educated than the others, and were indeed interesting companions. They were most courteous to us all along. The one soon found a place inside our wagon. We were consequently fairly cramped for space, and as we travelled through all night there was not much sleep to be had. The younger of these two brothers has since died of fever, greatly regretted by many friends.

Thus that fateful Sunday ended—a day never to be forgotten. Many a time during that night I shuddered when again I pictured some of the events I had passed through. At times it seemed to be only a dream, till the rumbling of the wagon and the gleam of the rifle barrels in the beautiful moonlight reminded me of the stern reality. Alas! it was no dream—'twas a stern reality. We were prisoners, but yet hopeful. Had not the Commandant given orders for us to be taken to the hotel, where we would be practically free? and had he not told me to have no concern, because the greatest care would be taken for the comfort of all of us? He did; but I then, as I said above, did not know the stamp of man I had to deal with. Among civilised nations an officer's boast is that his word is his honour, a word given to a conquered enemy especially, or a prisoner. But here, where war was commenced with a great blare of trumpets, announcing to the

world how much they had prayed to God to prosper their arms, and theirs alone—here an officer's word, an officer who is a *Government tool*, is *not* his honour, to put it very mildly. This was not my only experience of the fact. It is some months now since I was taken prisoner, and during these weary weeks I have had to experience this characteristic tens and tens of times. I will try, in charity, to believe that they behaved falsely to me only—me whom they delighted in hating and humiliating. But there! as soon as I try to cherish this charitable disposition a new piece of fraud and deceit is practised upon the little colony of prisoners here, and even charity refuses to be charitable. Oh! what must I do? The Government officials we are brought into contact with here, in our prison, cannot even buy me a little book *marked* 1/6, without charging 2/- for it—the extra 6d. naturally for their own honest pockets —a salve to the conscience, is it?

But more of this later on. Monday morning at seven o'clock we arrived at Zeerust, hungry and thoroughly tired out by the excitement of the previous day. We were kindly received at the hotel, and a bath and cup of delicious coffee soon set me up again.

And thus began another eventful day, which deserves a chapter to itself.

CHAPTER V

ANOTHER EVENTFUL DAY

I SOON discovered that, in Zeerust at all events, the state of affairs reminded one of some parts of America during the Civil War. Every other man I came across was some kind of official—a Commandant, or an Assistant-Commandant, or an Acting Commandant, or a Field-cornet, assisting or acting. The *acting* was always good—I can't say much for the *assisting!* The dignity was always immense, the ludicrous never absent. And if a man was not a Commandant something or other, or a Field-cornet something or other, he was a gaoler or a Zarp, you may be sure. If not that, then he wore a badge on his arm to show that he was an orderly, or an assistant-orderly, or a non-assistant-orderly, of the Red Cross Society. Some people were so uncharitable as to say that all who were afraid of going forth to war joined the Red

Cross! However it be, every Jew belonged to it.

Thus it happened that before breakfast, an acting-assistant-deputy-commandant-general of nothing in particular came over to the hotel to tell me that the whole thing was a mistake—*that I was free!* Imagine what a breakfast I took on this good news. After breakfast this man with the long title came again. I found that he was a Colonial man who, years ago, had come to the Transvaal as a schoolmaster. From that he had developed into a law agent, and from this, when the war began, into a Commandant something or other of Zeerust who had to stay at home. As I said, he came again, and brought his notebook with him. He took down my name, age, profession, abode, and asked me ever so many unimportant questions, then told me I was free, and asked me if I would like to go back to the Colony *viâ* Delagoa Bay. To this I agreed. All seemed to be well now, and we all felt light-hearted again—all were to go back.

Walking about in the streets of the little village during the forenoon, I was several times invited by men total strangers to me to go indoors with them into their own houses. They would then close the door, draw the curtains to, so that nobody

could look in from the street, and say to me in a whisper that they had longed to meet and thank me for the sentiments I had uttered at Beaconsfield and Kimberley. "You do not know," said they, "how this country is governed, what a curse there is on us. No justice, detectives everywhere, no public opinion allowed, nor dare you differ from Government policy—all is monopoly. And our officials, such as Landdrosts, &c.—alas, it is a crying shame!" The same was said to me by several parties, and these were all *Africanders*, Transvaal born, or coming originally from the Colony. I need not say that I was surprised, but also intensely grieved to find that matters were even worse than I had suspected. Aye, the people might well fight for liberty and independence. There was none of it in the country. Unfortunately they were fighting for it in a wrong way! Poor Transvaal—the yoke was indeed a galling one! Notwithstanding their outward union against what the people were taught to consider their common enemy—England—the mutterings and grumblings amongst themselves against their own wondrous specimens of Government officials were deep and strong.

It was a pitiable sight! During this morning, too, I became acquainted with the doctor and his family. What have I not to thank that grand old gentleman

and his wife and daughter for! But for them I doubt if I ever would have left Zeerust alive. I feel almost sure I would not. His generosity, and invariable kindness and courtesy, his ever candid friendship and shrewd advice, God knows how much I am indebted to him for all this, and what a load of gratitude I owe him and would gladly pay, if possible. As for his family, his kind, gentle wife and daughter, always so sympathising, so full of comfort—well, they were to me simply ministering angels! From the depths of my heart I say may God reward them, and help me always gratefully to remember their courageous friendship for me. Remember, to treat a prisoner-of-war kindly meant then to lay yourself open to suspicion and consequent persecution. My noble friends braved all this. They were *white* people, as the saying goes. During all my stay in Zeerust not one of the people belonging to my own nationality ever showed me the least kindness, or offered me a drop of water even, except the few who were suspected of English proclivities, and who were up to that time utter strangers to me, but good Samaritans all the same, who could not, and would not, see a fellow-being suffer unjustly, whilst priest and Levite coldly passed by on the other side.

Aye, Dr. Blake, how I revere and honour you, my

noble-hearted friend, and your noble family! Shall I ever be able to repay you something of what I owe you—a great debt of deep gratitude? I do trust so.

Back to my story now. A pleasant forenoon passed quickly—alas! too quickly. After dinner we were all summoned to the Landdrost's office. The Public Prosecutor there told us that the ladies would be looked after in the hotel, but that we men would be considered as prisoners of war; these were the instructions just received from Pretoria. Imagine what a thunder-clap it was! I had but just begun to enjoy liberty, and here I was about to lose it again. Why? The *Pretoria authorities* had been communicated with, and they had decided that we should be re-arrested. You see, this unhappy Government has such a bad conscience that it is afraid even of women, railway gangers, and correspondents. Everything was grist that came to their mill in the way of spite.

And so we were marched off to prison, and thrown, the four of us, into cell No. 1, 18 feet by 9 feet. In another room seven more prisoners of war, gangers also, brought from near Mafeking, were huddled, and in another room four Kaffirs, two of them in chains. The misery of that first night in prison how shall I speak of it! But let me devote a chapter to something else first.

CHAPTER VI

MAGNA EST VERITAS ET PREVALEBIT

THIS is a true word. Never mind what falsehoods you tell, but truth will out, sooner or later; only it is generally *later*, more's the pity!

Let me give a short summary of the untruths told me during the very first days of my captivity—untruths later to be overtaken by the truth. On the Sunday morning, after their first ebullition of temper was over, I asked several of the burghers, and especially Commandant Swarts, to tell me what had happened since war had been declared on the previous Wednesday evening. This is the answer I received: "There are 90,000 Transvaalers and Free Staters in the field all determined to die rather than give in; our commandos have rushed down Natal, from Laing's Nek, where we were massed *before* the war, *ready* for it (not like England, blustering but unready), *and reached Durban yesterday, and to-day Natal is ours!*"

When I expressed my doubts the answer given me, on this sacred day of rest, which the Transvaal Government *says* it respects so highly, was that "it is official news," sent to their lager late Saturday evening. This is No. I., and a very good I. too—a regular A1. Now prepare yourself, reader, for the next; it might take your breath away otherwise. It is this: "The Free Staters *took* De Aar *yesterday*, and combined Free State and Transvaal forces are besieging Kimberley now, which will surrender within a few days. We have swept everything before us, because we were *ready!*" No. II. is a stunner, and no mistake about it. Now the next: "Mafeking fell *yesterday*, Cronjé taking it with a rush; Baden-Powell and all his men being prisoners now, and on their way to Zeerust." This is No. III., and a real, lively, frisky lie it is. Another one: "*The whole Colony has risen*, the combined forces will sweep on to *Table Mountain!* We will not rest till we are there. Already a body of between 7,000 and 8,000 Colonials has crossed over into the Free State to help us. One flag now from the Zambezi to Table Bay." No. IV. makes me grow dizzy, it is so tall to look up to. "And," said my truth-loving Commander, "our northern commando will this week take Buluwayo," bringing the total number of crammers up to five. And to every doubt I expressed the

invariable answer, given with the simplicity of the "heathen Chinee," was, "but it is official, we got it last night." And this latter statement was quite true, let me say it here—I've seen myself many of these *official* wires. Thus a pure and honest Government delighted in gulling its simple subjects! Of course, *official* meant Paul Kruger says so, and even if he tells an untruth it must be true! That was the general idea.

I knew instinctively at the time that this was what the Yankee would call "awfully tall lying"; and now, when I look back—four months after these "official truths" were told me—I could laugh and despise these liars, only I feel more inclined to weep that men, guiding a State through critical times, could sink so low. I know quite well that false reports, outrageously false, were spread on our side, too; but then it was done by irresponsible correspondents and scare-mongers. But here every lie bore the official stamp. The good, simple burgher would not lie thus—his Government—wondrous Government!—taught him, and, alas, too many proved to be but too apt pupils.

'Tis February now, and their troops never got beyond Colenso, and are now retiring rather quickly; and they never got further south than our few Colonial towns occupied by them; and they

have never taken Kimberley, which is now relieved, nor Mafeking, soon to be relieved, I hope; nor did they ever get further north than the Crocodile—they could not even take Fort Tuli. Since then time upon time Government officials assured me that the combined troops of the two States amounted only to 50,000 men, and as for the 7,000 Colonials, why, they are still waiting for them here!

And Table Mountain is still as far off as ever. All this was official lying, of which the reader will hear more later on. And these very officials are the men who tell the world how they pray to God for success, and how sure they are that God will give them the victory, for their cause is so just! Does a just cause require to be bolstered up by such shameful lying? Are real God-fearing men boasters and idle braggarts? Alas! I have been terribly disillusioned. I had a different opinion of the President and his officials. I differed from their political opinions, but respected those among them who were *not* political Hollanders, for there are many other good Hollanders among them. And now?—well, never mind what I think—only I am disillusioned and bitterly disappointed!

So much for official lying—now a little private lying.

One of our escort, a Colonial-born German, who had had a little education, and been to Europe with his parents as a youngster, acquainted some of my fellow-prisoners on the way to Zeerust with several little interesting experiences of his.

He told them that he had once met Sir Donald Currie, who was so struck with his ability and general personality that he offered to adopt him as his own son, but "I preferred coming back to South Africa," said he. I wonder what Sir Donald will say to this! Further, he told them that he once travelled from Kimberley to Cape Town, and was mistaken for the Attorney-General of the Cape (was it Sir Thomas Upington, I wonder?) and given a whole saloon carriage to himself! And then he informed the party that he never would have fought on the Transvaal side, but as he owned all the farms from Zeerust right away some thirty miles to the north-west, he had to do it, or forfeit all his property. And thus the tedium of the journey was pleasantly (?) beguiled. Arrival at Zeerust let in the glare of truth, and our imaginative hero dwindled down to a very commonplace little fellow—very commonplace, indeed, even in the estimate of his own compatriots. But I forgive him—I can even excuse his propensities. Does not his Government officially encourage him to develop his truth-disguising talents? But *magna est veritas et prevalebit!*

CHAPTER VII

IN A PRISON

WE were arrested on Monday afternoon at about four o'clock, and marched up to prison and lodged in cell No. 1, as stated. It was a little room of 18 feet by 9 feet. At one end, high up in the wall, was a hole 18 inches by twelve inches, called by courtesy a window. In that hole is fixed a wooden frame with four panes of glass tilted at an angle of 45°. All the air one gets when the door is closed comes through this aperture. In the door of the cell there is a little square hole—a peep-hole for the warders—3 inches by 3 inches. Here you have the whole elaborate system of ventilation explained. Four of us were locked up in this little cell—the stationmaster and myself and the old Scotch ganger and his brother-in-law. Fortunately I had thought of taking my two mattresses from my wagon before it was sent away

again. So I could use them and my own rugs too. Otherwise I would have had to satisfy myself with the two rugs, *and nothing more*, which the kind, humane authorities provide sentenced prisoners with. On the hard boards of the floor, for no bedstead is allowed, I would have had to lie had I not my own bedding. No chair, no table, nothing was there but the four bare walls. I was not even allowed to keep my portmanteau in the cell nor my dressing-case, which I had managed to save. A bucket of water, a tin mug, and a towel constituted the list of our luxuries. Being allowed at first to take our meals in the hotel, we went down for dinner under escort of the gaoler. Let me say here that this man, according to his lights, all along during those dreary weeks treated me very kindly. He meant it well, and I feel grateful to him. After dinner this first night we were conducted back to gaol, and now came the ordeal. We were going to be locked in for the night. Shall I ever forget the horror of that moment? *Our* door was shut last of all. One by one the terrible bolts of the other cells were shot to. There were seven other prisoners of war in another larger cell, and some Kaffirs in a third, two of them in chains, as I mentioned before. And now our turn came. When the three bolts were closed and the double lock locked, a terrible

sensation came over me. The sound of these bolts was jarring and grating to an ear accustomed to beautiful music. The clank of the two prisoners' chains seemed to spell my doom—it came like an awful whisper to say, "*You are a prisoner too.*" It seemed to me as if now only I began to realise the full extent of the Government's treachery towards me. It was a bitter moment, one of the bitterest of my life. Once or twice already I had been brought very near the shadowland by fell disease. More than once have I passed through the dangers of the desert and the savage. The very day before I had escaped being shot in cold blood by a hair's breadth. But I doubt if ever I felt a more bitter pang than when those horrible bolts were shot home on me, and I knew that my liberty was taken away from me. I walked up and down in that cell like a caged animal. Now I felt a terrible rage taking possession of my heart, then again a feeling of despair threatened to overwhelm me. God alone knows how terrible that night was. It seemed to add years to my life. All my property stolen, all my plans frustrated, all my prospects blighted, myself a prisoner in a felon's cell—and the jarring of bolts and clanking of chains which continued to ring in my ears! Aye, I hear them still, those horrible bolts and chains; I still see that door shut firmly upon me.

I remember how I looked up to the star-studded sky with a bursting heart. Through that little hole of a window I could see a few, sparkling brightly, oh, so far away. How sweet their glimmer was, how they seemed to beckon to me! And I was impotent —a caged prisoner! I could not go to them. Then I heard our warders talk outside in the guard-room, and Kaffirs sing in a location near by. But I was locked in. I could not go out into the glorious night. Liberty, sweet liberty, how I longed for thee then! Lie down and sleep? I tried to, but how could I? The atmosphere was stifling, and I was overpowered by my own terrible emotions. My brain was on fire, my lips dry and parched. The fever of indignation and horror, coupled to the consciousness of my own impotence, was devouring me. And for ought I knew I might be shot on the morrow, as I was told.

It seemed to me as if now only I began to understand what suffering was, and what pity was. How many men, thought I, besides myself have not been unjustly punished and imprisoned! How many have not suffered innocently, whilst I, a free man outside their terrible dungeon, little thought of such, or pitied them. Never before had I realised what it meant to be a captive; now I knew and experienced it. I felt as if I could go down on my knees beside

my two fellow-prisoners, the Kaffirs in chains, to comfort them and speak words of encouragement, for soon they were to be mercilessly lashed—lashed as only a Transvaal gaoler can lash a Kaffir. I felt as if my heart could break with pity. All this happened months ago, but I thank God that I still have the same feeling. I have become convinced of many evils in existence here, and it will be my duty as a lover of my country to expose wrongs and seek to redress grievances when I am free again. As a man I cannot help despising the unmanly, mean things I have seen done, and that too in the name of patriotism; but sufferings appeal to me more strongly than ever before, and the cry of the miserable pierces my heart deeper than ever. That first horrible night taught me many a lesson—taught me to pity and feel compassion, but also to feel indignant when cruelty and meanness are practised. Here where I sit writing in my spacious room in our Pretoria prison, surrounded by British officers, educated men and gentlemen, I cannot help comparing men and matters. But always, when I close my eyes, the experiences and scenes of that terrible night come back to me; I hear all those sounds again, the horrible grating of bolts and bars. I still hear the voices of my warders and the people outside—aye, and that one other terrible

sound. The poor Kaffirs, the chain-gang, could not move in their sleep without the iron chains clanking against each other. In the deathlike stillness of the night those ominous sounds, dread remembrancers of captivity, struck on my ear from hour to hour. It was horrible! How long I tramped up and down in my cage I do not know now. I only know it was near the dawn of day before some fitful moments of sleep brought temporary oblivion. But even these were disturbed by dreams. God only knows how a prisoner must suffer—prisoners who are the victims of petty spite and meanness, hated by the very men they had tried to benefit.

That very night, as I learned next day, there was a prayer-meeting in the church. I had heard the bells ring the evening before, and I loved to listen to the sound; but what happened inside? Long, passionate prayers were sent up to heaven for success to their arms; but not a prayer, not a sigh for fellow-Christians, close by, treacherously imprisoned by the very Government they were praying for. The very official who had locked me up was in that prayer-meeting. Did any thought of pity stir his heart? Nothing of the kind. An eye-witness informed me that bitter, spiteful things were said, only that, even in the house of God! I am

afraid Matthew v. 7 was sadly forgotten in the Transvaal during the war: "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy." Is my accusation a hard one? No, and again no, for I have seen and heard too much here. Oh, the cruel things done by officials, and their frightful words of hatred, and their cursing and swearing! May God have mercy upon them! They had no mercy—they knew no *mercy*. What right then have they to expect a *blessing?* Echo answers, What?

The beautiful bright morning came at length, but not for us. It came for the free, for the oppressor, for the tyrant, for the merciless. The poor prisoners could only look on from behind prison bars and long for liberty.

Before I was taken to gaol the previous day my wagon and everything belonging to me, was taken —no, *stolen*—even my dear little folding Hamlin and Mason organ, shut up in its box, with all my beloved music. What a comfort music would otherwise have been to me in my captivity! But no—these kind, patriotic officials had to prove and show their zeal by deeds of dishonesty and cruelty. Hundreds of pounds in value were thus "looted" from me. I saved only a portmanteau with some clothing and my dressing-case, and a few rugs and

my two mattresses. But then the Transvaal Government, *not the real burgher*, fights against non-combatants. And—the mockery of it!—they consider themselves particularly up-to-date in civilised warfare!

In our case, as I learnt afterwards, they really thought they had made a smart haul. The ladies, forsooth, were spies (to spy what?), and I had a Maxim concealed about my person, I suppose, and dynamite in my pockets, or poison, and I was going to send the whole Transvaal "up in the sky so high" with an explosion of liquid air. Oh, I was so terribly dangerous a man; eighty-four good men and true had to catch me by strategy and treachery. They succeeded, and the South African Republic was saved! Puny, insignificant little officials! Really, I write about you more in sorrow than in anger—or should I say, more in mirth than in anger? You do cut such a ridiculous figure! You capture railway officials and non-combatants, and then flash the story of your grand success all over the land.

Yet this first, horrible night remains a reality, a terrible reality. A lifetime will not wipe out the memory thereof. Nothing can; nor do I hope ever to forget the lesson it taught me, or to neglect practising it—"Blessed are the merciful: for they

shall obtain mercy." The officials at Zeerust could not have displayed more venom towards us, their prisoners, and towards me especially, had we been criminals of the deepest dye.

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CHAPTER VIII

THE FIRST WEEK

AS I said before, for the first few days of my imprisonment we were allowed some liberties. I have to thank the Public Prosecutor of Zeerust for this courtesy. This official was a gentleman, one of the very few I met with in the Transvaal among Government officials. I gladly make use of this opportunity to assure him of my gratitude for his great courtesy always extended to me. When I was harshly treated by others he, I know, did his best for me and the others. He was the man who allowed us the few liberties we enjoyed at first. The stationmaster and myself were allowed to take our meals at the hotel, and, accompanied by the gaoler, to go out at about four in the afternoon and stay out till after dinner, being back at 6.30, of course always attended by the gaoler. Every afternoon, therefore, till the Sunday following we

went to the good doctor's house, at his invitation, to stay till dinner time. Those little visits were like glimpses of heaven. Shall I ever forget them? We had music and fruit and delightful talks, the doctor with his charming wife and daughter doing everything to make us feel at home and enjoy our short spell of liberty. Aye, the music especially—can I ever forget it? Lord Henry Somerset's "Echo" and "Song of Sleep," and some other grand old favourites—how I sang and re-sang them! And the duets we had! Yes, those were glorious hours. Their memory made the locked cell bearable every evening. May I say again, God reward these good Samaritans for their infinite kindness and staunch friendship, notwithstanding the risks they incurred thereby, as we shall see later on.

On Wednesday my young friend, Harry Neethling, who had been taken prisoner, so treacherously too, *before* the war broke out, was also sent to the gaol. He, the stationmaster, and I then occupied one cell. The next chapter will tell about his experiences.

Our meals at the hotel, however, did not last long. This privilege granted us was too much for the charity of some of the Zeerust people. Our going to and fro every day for our meals, though we were guarded, was to them an eyesore. Pressure was

brought to bear on the authorities, and on the Saturday this privilege was cancelled. A later chapter—"The Man and the Woman"—will deal more fully with this part of our history.

We were still allowed to visit the doctor every afternoon, but, alas! on the Monday morning following this privilege also was cancelled. The Government could not extend its drop of generosity any longer. They were so unaccustomed to act generously that this little trial hurt them too much! It had to be abandoned accordingly. The one official referred to before did his best for us, I know, but in vain. Naturally, this first and only comparatively happy week passed like a dream—all too soon.

When our hotel meals were stopped the kind doctor's wife came to our rescue. She offered to send us our daily meals to the prison. We took our prisoners' share of meat and sent it down to her house, where she then prepared our meals, adding ever so many nice things. Those meals—so appetising, and so daintly served—how they increase our load of gratitude! Imagine the three of us in our little cell around a little table, which was then allowed us, with snow-white cloth and napkins even! A beautiful bouquet of flowers came up every day; and many other little things a woman only thinks of were provided. We always

said that our meals were little whiffs of home. Nothing was wanting except the pudding of liberty! As the sequel will show, however, even this innocent pleasure was begrudged us, and a stop put to it very soon afterwards.

For the first week, too, our fellow-prisoners, Nurse Ruth and Miss R., were allowed to visit us for a minute or two, and then that also was put a stop to. With great ostentation we were informed that a merciful Transvaal Government was going to treat the prisoners of war as *untried* prisoners. And their own regulations showed what liberties were extended to such prisoners. We, however, were *denied* all such privileges and treated as condemned felons. Transvaal justice all over! And yet the Government pretends to have the monopoly of Providential care. A friend, getting tired of waiting, when during the first few months everything seemed to go against the Imperial troops, expressed the situation very shrewdly: "The mills are grinding very slowly, and the Miller is commandeered and monopolised by the Transvaal."

It is possible to entertain the thought for a moment that a just God would specially bless the efforts of an unjust Government. I do not mean to say that England has never done an unjust deed, that during this war even nothing wrong was com-

mitted. But then our Generals did not quote Bible texts to cover a false report and an abominable falsehood. Think of those misstatements I referred to in a former chapter. And there are many more to which I will have to refer later on. Let me mention one now. *After* I had been lodged in prison one of their newspapers, the meanest rag I have ever come across, published an official wire from Zeerust informing the public that *I had been released on parole.* And in Pretoria the *Times* correspondent was similarly informed by the Government, of which *honest Paul Kruger* is the head, that I "had been taken prisoner, but immediately released!" Is it not an insult to the Divine Being to expect of Him *special* blessing on their undertaking? No wonder that a Government so hypocritical should have been a curse instead of a blessing to the people. And now, I'm afraid, the culminating calamity is going to overtake them. And yet this calamity they so dread will only be a blessing in disguise. If the Augæan stable of the Transvaal Government is not cleansed now worse things will befall the country. There has been civil war once before—there can be one again. It surprised me to hear from so many sides expressions of deepest hatred against the Hollanders and their Mephistophelian influence. One said to me, "We have to thank the Hollanders

for this war." Another, "They will try to get the war to last as long as possible; they sit at home enjoying the salaries of fat billets, whilst the burgher fights and gives his life at the front."

But more of this also later on. Our first comparatively happy week passed like a dream. Had the environment remained unchanged captivity would have been bearable. This my captors noticed, consequently, goaded on by a lust for cruelty and oppression worthy of the fiends of the Spanish Inquisition, they determined to make of my little prison cell a torture chamber. I had to be placed on the rack as far as was possible—as far as they dared go. These are bitter words, but the reader must kindly remember that I differentiate greatly between the good, genuine Transvaaler and his Government gang. The burgher is all right—brave and honest and kind-hearted till he falls under the baleful influence of his Government or becomes a Government official himself. Farewell, then, a long farewell, to all his simplicity and honesty of character. This has been too often experienced, and I have kept eyes and ears open.

Our first Sunday in prison was to us a very pathetic one. By that time there were in all seventeen prisoners of war, besides the criminal prisoners. We gathered in the entrance-hall and I

conducted a short service. I spoke in Dutch to the few warders who cared to attend, and then in English to my fellow-prisoners. It was a solemn, touching service. How we prayed for dear ones far away! And, reader, can you believe it? even that service was begrudged us, and put an end to a few Sundays later. The very Monday after this first Sunday the report was rife in the little village that I had conducted a service in the doctor's house; and surely no miserable prisoner ought to be allowed to do this!

Just one more episode connected with this week before the chapter closes. I referred before to the Acting-Commandant (or whatever his full title may be) of Zeerust—the little agent fellow. He distinguished himself beautifully—thusly. A telegram had been received from the Mafeking besieging army to the effect that their General had sent a messenger, under a flag of truce, to Colonel Baden-Powell, and that he had not yet returned, though some hours had already elapsed. People with evil consciences are naturally suspicious, and such was this self-important little official. Of course he at once jumped to the conclusion that a British officer had made a prisoner of a man coming up under a flag of truce—and this was an insult to the Transvaal flag. The little man went mad; he rampaged up

and down the street, foaming at the mouth, telling all and sundry that he would wait two hours more and then, if no news had arrived of the safe return of the messenger, he would have all the Zeerust prisoners brought down to the market-place and shot! Aye, there was blood in his eye and blood in his words, but very little in his veins—the foolish man!

And the messenger? Do you know what happened to him? Colonel Baden-Powell had received him, as a British officer would receive such a messenger, courteously; had listened to his message, and taken him to the hotel and given him a rattling good meal. In fact the young man, according to his own statement, enjoyed himself so hugely that he was loth to leave. And here our little frothy Commandant, for no reason at all, went curvetting up and down the street, for all the world like a toy general on a tin gee-gee, thirsting for our blood! Were the sight not so degrading, its humour could make you hold your sides with laughter.

'Tis the old story over again, of little minds and little things!

CHAPTER IX

HARRY'S EXPERIENCES

I HAVE told before how my young travelling companion, Harry Neethling, came to be taken. On Wednesday morning, October 11th, *before* war was declared, he had ridden over to the Boer lager, eleven miles away from Lobatsi, to make inquiries. The honest (?) Commander made him write me a letter giving me false information. To himself they said that they would release him on Thursday and send him back to me. Thinking that he had to do with a gentleman, Harry believed him, and in friendly conversation told him about myself and our plans and intentions. Of this his wily interlocutor made use, and, in conjunction with his superior officer, he decided to keep Harry and surprise us at Lobatsi, after sending me a message of peace—verily, conduct worthy of a gentleman! And all this even *before* war was declared!

On the Thursday Harry was sent to Zeerust. There he was examined by the Landdrost (magistrate) and the little Commander above referred to, who gave him to understand that he was suspected of being a spy. Fancy, a spy who comes to them in broad daylight as a friend in time of peace! After long examination and still longer deliberation, it was decided to set him free—*i.e.*, to allow him to stay with the Dutch Reformed clergyman of the place. On Friday he was told that he could go back to Lobatsi; but just as he was preparing for departure the order was countermanded, and he was packed off to the Hoofd-Lager (the main camp) near Mafeking. He had left Lobatsi without a coat, as it was warm, and he intended to return at once. His kind captors promised him a coat, in fact a suit of clothes, but never gave him anything. He had to stay as he was till I came and brought him some of his clothes. On the way to the lager he was taken over several farms, waiting for a lift from one to the other. He met with insults and sneers in abundance. Arrived at the lager, he heard and saw many things. The greatest insults he received were from quasi-relatives—renegades who had come from the Colony, and, in the eye of the Transvaal, were now on their trial for patriotism. He heard their hypocritical talk, and was greatly struck by the behaviour of the

younger burghers especially. Whilst a service was being held on the Sunday, in which the older burghers were devoutly engaged, these younger ones were swaggering, swearing, and gambling outside, jeering at the piety of "those old people." When the news of my capture reached them there was a great outburst of joy. Vile epithets were hurled at me, says Harry, and he was assured that they were going to bring me to the lager to be court-martialled and shot. Imagine my young friend's misery when this was solemnly told him! Further proof all this of the existence of the vile plot against me—the murder which almost was committed on that Sunday. My death was decided on, I know, but the resolution was overruled by one higher in authority. Who it was I have not yet found out. I hope I will one day. I would like to see the one man who still had some sense of justice within him.[1] My Kimberley speeches, Harry says, and my reputed friendship for Mr. Rhodes, were raked up and made use of to fire their spirit of revenge and hatred. Amongst others this story was told: A certain Transvaal sergeant of police, living on the border, often visited Mafeking. I myself had often seen him there. This man had enjoyed great hospitality

[1] I have later heard that Gen. Cronjé was the man, and thank him for this measure of justice.

there. The magistrate, mayor, and others had treated him with great kindness, little knowing that he was abusing their hospitality by playing the spy. This is what he would say to the Mafeking friends: "I don't know what to do if war breaks out. I have property in Mafeking, my wife is a Colonial lady; I have a great mind to move into the Colony." More still: *giving* them what looked like confidence, he *received* their confidence. No one suspected his object. Said he: "If you don't fortify Mafeking, the Transvaal will never attack it. Your best policy is to keep Colonel Hore's column outside—fourteen miles off, at Ramathlabama (where, in the open, it could of course become an easy prey to the Boer commandos). In turn the unsuspecting mayor and magistrate told him all about Hore's column, so he said, and the plans (as far as known) of Colonel Baden-Powell, and the amount of ammunition and forage, &c., stored in Mafeking. This is the sergeant's story. I suspect there is a good deal of truth in it. When I arrived in Mafeking, a few weeks before the war, to buy my outfit for my trip, I found a good many of the townspeople indignant with the mayor because he would not call a public meeting to discuss Mafeking's defence, and ask for the moving of Colonel Hore's column into the town. And when afterwards a meeting was demanded the mayor,

thinking himself very wise after the information given him by a *Transvaaler*, very stupidly said that this war-scare and this demand for weapons had originated on *my* arrival in the town. For this contemptible remark he was promptly called to order, of course. However, here is the fact. Mayor and magistrate, primed by this sergeant, *would* have it that Hore's column should not be moved into Mafeking, the town not be prepared for defence, and the inhabitants not be armed; and all this—how foolish!—because a prospective enemy had given that advice!

And now the sergeant goes on with his story: "The mayor and magistrate," says he, "both told me that but for the arrival of Mr. Hofmeyr in Mafeking, as an emissary of Rhodes, there would have been no defence of the place to-day. He (Mr. H.) is therefore the cause of all this bloodshed. We must shoot him!" And this treacherous brave sat down. He had said his say, and the myrmidons around applauded him and his story and his sentiments!

Now, the mayor and magistrate of Mafeking are English gentlemen, and therefore I don't believe they would have told such a traitorous lie about me. They were not guarded enough, however, in their conversation, and had given themselves away to this

swashbuckler. How otherwise this story of his, that but for me Mafeking would not have been defended? And then they could have taken Colonel Hore's column in their original exposed position, and Mafeking also, without loss of life to them, said he. Fortunately, not I, but Colonel Baden-Powell was wiser than our would-be Transvaal adviser. Let this be a lesson to mayor and magistrate, however. They, unintentionally, might have been the cause of these people finally deciding to shoot me. The sergeant tried his best to persuade them to do it, using *their* names freely as his authority.

Poor Harry, what agony all this caused him! On Tuesday he was sent back to Zeerust, from the lager, a free man, as he was given to understand, only to be arrested again on Wednesday and put into gaol with me. I was intensely glad to have him, for my sake, but sorry indeed for his. He was so young still, about nineteen years, and had joined me expecting to enjoy a trip through the Kalihari, and now such a disaster had overtaken him. He took it wonderfully bravely, however, and never lost his spirits, and there were many comparatively happy hours we spent in our cell, reading and studying—he Algebra and I French.

In the name of common sense and fair play now, what right had that particular Commander to take

Harry? and what right had the authorities, later on, to put him in prison? Tell me! Was it not all black treachery, of which any people calling itself civilised ought to be ashamed? I doubt if any Kaffir tribe would have done such a disgraceful deed. And this reminds me. Harry was very plucky and defended himself and me very boldly, though he stood alone against a host. They were maligning the English for laying mines round Mafeking and using dynamite. "No civilised people do this," they cried exultingly. Then Harry drove them into a corner by remarking: "Then you can't be civilised, because you have dynamite mines round Pretoria." "And who," pursued he, "threw dynamite into the caves filled with Kaffirs, in the Malaboch War? Were you uncivilised then?" They could not answer him of course, and, as such people will do, waxed angry and threatened to make him groom their horses. Aye, but Harry was a plucky young man. I honour him for this. He gave them a Roland, bright and brilliant, for every Oliver, and often one to spare. No wonder these officials hated him. One said, when driven into a corner, "The young fellow lies so well, that a man must believe him!"

Well, Harry is free now, and at home, I believe.

I am glad, but I miss him. He was always such a comfort and help to me—so bright and cheery. I say, most emphatically, the cowards who so treacherously arrested him and put him in prison, treating him like a dog, ought to be ashamed of themselves. Retribution, I am sure, will overtake them. It was such a dastardly thing to do. This satisfaction, however, has he—he was the very first prisoner of war—taken *before* the expiry of the Ultimatum even—the first accordingly to suffer for his Queen. And right bravely he did it!

CHAPTER X

THE MAN AND THE WOMAN

AS promised before, I must now explain how it came about that our privileges were curtailed. Up to the Friday we three, inmates of the historical cell No. 1, had our meals at the hotel, where the owners treated us with exceeding kindness and consideration. What put a stop to it? The heading of the chapter gives the answer to the question. Let me tell the story. I have mentioned already that scowling looks were continually turned on us, and muttered curses hurled at us as we passed through the streets to and fro from hotel to prison. The principal performers in this farce were the officials and their understrappers. It was so enjoyable, so manly, so courageous to jeer at an unarmed man, a prisoner, one who could not defend himself. In the hotel dining-room we noticed the same thing. 'Every one who wanted

to prove his great loyalty to the Transvaal—the Jews especially—believed that the only way of doing it was by behaving like a cowardly cad to a defenceless man. To give as little cause of offence as possible we decided to take our meals before the usual time, and then, when others came in, not to speak a word. On the very day we agreed to do this, however, *the man and the woman came to lunch.* It was a neighbouring farmer and his wife. Both had been educated above the usual standard of burgher, and in the Colony, too, I believe. They knew what politeness and decent behaviour meant. I would otherwise not have remembered their exploits, nor have written about them. The *man* was a rather ugly specimen, decently clad—yet ugly, even when he looked his best. Imagine his looks when angry! The woman was neatly dressed, was large and stout. There was a good deal more of her than of her husband. *Her* complexion was bright—*his* like yellow parchment. She could look pleasant, but the face was of that class which surliness and anger at once deform, making it repulsive. This couple had obtained all the necessary information in the village, and therefore knew all about us. They were in a towering passion, and when they entered the room I was attracted, or rather repulsed, by their dark, scowling

looks. The woman was livid with passion, the man green and yellow. Why? Because, as he whispered loud enough for every one to hear, that "hated Hofmeyr, the accursed prisoner, is allowed to eat with decent people!" How complimentary! Now the *man* was a deacon of his Church, and wore a long face and longer frock-coat on Sundays, whilst the *woman* sat in her pew solemnly and attentively, praying, "Forgive us our sins as we forgive them that sin against us." Ah, but that was on Sundays; and when one prays "Forgive us," &c., one does not really mean it! And then the pair, thus contorted with rage, banged down on their chairs.

The *man* sat down somewhere on the small of his back, stretched out his legs as far as they would reach, thrust his hands into his trousers pockets, and stared at me, vulgarly and insolently, mumbling like a maniac all the time. The *woman* sat down motionless, boiling over with rage. All the while the poor waiter, a coloured boy, stood waiting for orders. The *man* turns to him now and gives his orders in a stentorian tone, venting his anger on that poor fellow, disapproving of every dish, condemning everything. Scowling, grumbling, and in a towering passion they finish their meal. Had the spectacle not been so sad a one—for I knew what it all meant—

and such a travesty of politeness and good manners, I could have burst out laughing. And I am fond of a good hearty laugh. Why, I could have lifted the little puppy by the scruff of his neck, and swept the floor with him! Behaviour such as theirs is reserved only for the semi-barbarian, and such unfortunately this poor man was, this noble warrior, who *could* gloat over a conquered enemy; who *could* thus treat a defenceless man. What a noble-hearted brave! Aye, how this *man* and *woman* thirsted for my blood! how they longed for my scalp! Unfortunately I could not then oblige the turtle-doves.

Was it worth while writing down all this? *Cui bono?* some one asks. Wait a moment, dear reader. The story has a sequel. The man went out after his lunch and painted the town red. *He* would see to it, he shouted, that no prisoner got his meals in a hotel, and that "this fellow H. should be locked up like a Kaffir!" The *man*, ably seconded by the *woman*, was verily on the rampage. Government officials were interviewed, the wires were used to communicate with Cronjé's lager, near Mafeking, and after a day or two the noble *man* and his angel of a wife were made happy by hearing that the order had come to lock up altogether Mr. H. in his cell, as if he had been a murderer, instead of an inoffensive man and an honest *political* opponent.

How happy they must have been, and how soundly they must have slept that night in the consciousness of a deed well done! They had added to the load of a fellow-man's misery and sorrow. They had refused him the proverbial cup of cold water, as had the other civilised, brave heroes who so ably seconded their efforts. I feel sure that a barbarian enemy would have shown more consideration and mercy to a conquered foe.

Ah, but these were civilised people, Transvaal officials who were anxious that the world should believe in their civilisation and chivalry! *Credat Judæus!* say I.

Thus were our privileges cut off. Such was the beginning; and then the curtailment came with a run, as the sequel will show. This *man* and *woman* were but types of many others, some even more hard-hearted and cruel. Alas! what does not a heart miss that knows not generosity, and a life that understands not that the greatest of all gifts is charity!

CHAPTER XI

DAILY ROUTINE IN PRISON

I MAY just as well tell here what our daily routine was in prison, and may premise by saying that I have never been much of a sleeper in my life, and that now since I am a prisoner I sleep less than ever before. In fact I have often for weeks suffered from insomnia. It is my great enemy—one I fear. In prison we were locked in at 6.30. A courteous gaoler, until our doors were ordered to be locked day and night, some little time after, allowed mine to stand open till seven o'clock, so that I might have as much cool air as possible, for the nights especially were stifling. When locked in we went to bed at once, for the chairs kind friends had supplied us with were taken out, as also our little table sent by our friend the doctor. Lying on the mattress on the floor we read or studied by candle-light till 9 or 9.30. Then the lights had to be put out, and we

lay talking, of absent friends generally, till eleven or later. My friends managed to drop off then. Morpheus, however, seldom took me in his arms before 12.30 or 1, and very often much later. As a rule I was up by six, when the doctor's delicious coffee was at the door. How we missed this luxury when it was after a while forbidden! How we enjoyed that delicious early morning beverage! Yes, there *were* some kind people in Zeerust who understood Christ's doctrine of the drop of cold water, and put their knowledge into practice, too, which says ever so much more! Shall I forget the hot scones that used to come up with this coffee, and the doctor's kind, good daughter, who purposely got up early in the morning to prepare these for us? Unselfish Daisy—forgive me for revealing your name: a name as pretty as you were, reminder of all your kindness and goodness. Please once more accept my warmest and heartfelt thanks. You will never know what you and your dear parents were to me and all of us—how you really made our sad fate bearable. May God reward you abundantly, and grant you great happiness, for you have tried to make others happy.

After this early coffee I had my bath in a *zinc bucket*, which was all the washing-stand we were allowed. Attached to the prison were two little

yards, surrounded by high walls, thirty by twenty feet each. In one of these I used to sit till breakfast time (eight o'clock) reading or studying. After bathing and dressing Harry and I swept our room (several times we scrubbed it, too, ourselves) and tidied up, brought in our table and chairs, and above all our beautiful flowers. After breakfast, whilst our cell-doors were still allowed to be open, we had a walk up and down in the corridor, and then again reading and studying till one o'clock, the luncheon hour. The heat in the stuffy prison was by that time generally intense, and therefore after the meal we lay down in as little clothing as possible to woo a little sleep. This very seldom proved a success, for our warders always talked and laughed in the loudest tone possible, and their incessant march up and down soon banished all sleep. At about four o'clock we again frequented the little yards to get some fresh air. The doctor used to come up to see us then, bringing news, cigars, and words of good cheer. How we looked forward to these valued visits, how we appreciated them! Ah, doctor, doctor, how good you were to *all* of us! Shall I forget how you dosed the prisoners less favoured than we were with quinine? Shall I forget the amused twinkle in your eye when you produced your large black bottle, containing one

tiny drop of quinine and the rest—well, let us say water? Shall I forget the *at first* astonished and then *grateful* looks of the men when they tasted this wonderful quinine, first sipping a wee little, then tilting the half-filled tumbler to a generous angle, and caressingly coaxing the last lingering drop out of that tumbler's bottom! You were district surgeon. You dared do such things. Had any one else tried it—but the thought is too terrible! And then, too, you are a brave, independent American, and the poor Government officials of Zeerust at the time actually believed that the United States would not only interfere in their behalf, but also pay their debts. Can you imagine such folly?—and yet so it was. But the doctor could another tale unfold.

During these happy afternoon hours we often, too, used to sing together songs we all knew. There were some good voices among us. How often the "Old Folks at Home" brought a mist to the eyes, and "Whisper and I shall Hear," and the "Holy City," and "Sweet Marie," and "Mary of Argyle." On Sundays we sang hymns (Ancient and Modern). Ah, those old favourites, "Abide with Me," "Onward, Christian Soldiers," "Art thou Weary, art thou Languid?"—how they cheered and comforted us! God knows what happy blessed hours these were.

Then, too, there were tales told and jokes cracked. One of our fellow-prisoners was a splendid *raconteur*. Lombardini was his name, and my good friend will, for the sake of those days of tribulation, forgive my mentioning it. The stories he could tell! I have never heard the like. One after the other they rolled out, each wittier than the other and smarter. He could keep us in roars of laughter. Yes, Lombardini, old chum, you contributed more than you know to our happiness and cheerfulness. You do not know how you helped me especially to ward off the demon of melancholia. Will I ever see you again? I trust so, for I will certainly try to find you "after the uproar is over." We must have another long chat together.

At six o'clock dinner came, and the day was over.

Thus passed every day, till our cells were locked, and then all communication between cell and cell was forbidden. The *man* and the *woman* did not rest till the cruelty practised upon me broke up my whole nervous system and shattered my health. I wonder if they will be glad to hear that I have recovered. If not, I am sorry that neither in this can I oblige them. They will just have to grin and bear it, poor things!

The gaoler and a few of the warders were very nice, and often one or two would come into my

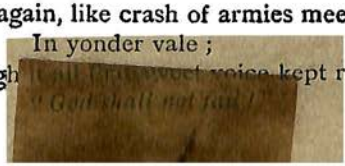
cell of an evening for a little chat. They really intended to be kind, and I am sorry to say that their kindheartedness later on brought them trouble, for they were warned most emphatically not to show us kindness on pain of dismissal. And then came again darkness and too often sleeplessness for hours. Ah, how one's thoughts did travel then! There was a good deal of rain, too, terrible thunderstorms, mostly in the night. I delighted in watching the flashes, and listening to the mighty cannonade of heaven, the voice of the Great Creator. Listening one night the following thoughts came to me, and herewith I close the story of the daily routine of our life. Let me call it—

THE PRISONER'S REVERIE.

I heard a voice, a gentle voice, soft coming
Through the storm.
The rain was fierce, the roaring winds were chilling,
Yet breathing warm.

Of skies so blue, my sunny homeland lying
In peace beyond,
This gentle voice, unto my voice replying,
Made answer fond.

And then again, like crash of armies meeting
In yonder vale;
But through [illegible] kept repeating,



CHAPTER XII

TRAITORS

I HAVE come to a very dark page of this little history. The episode I am about to relate made a deep impression on me, revealing depths of meanness to which I did not think a man could sink. One can expect anything from an enemy, but when a friend turns against you there are no words which can adequately describe one's feelings. I have suffered from such false friends before this, but this act of treachery involved a question of life and death, and was, therefore, perhaps my worst experience of human nature.

Let me tell all that happened. I have before referred to the ganger and his wife ; perhaps in not too courteous terms, but the reader will excuse these when he has read this story. This man and his wife came up to Lobatsi station on the Friday morning before our capture from their cottage

down the line. They seemed so helpless. The stationmaster therefore allowed them to put up in the ladies' waiting-room, and we all showed them every kindness. On the way to Zeerust I, as an experienced traveller, made them as comfortable as possible—they *were* so helpless. During the night, as mentioned before, I managed to let them have the half of our wagon. Arrived at Zeerust, they were still more helpless, and confidentially informed me that they had no money with them at all. I myself had only a few pounds—everything else had been taken from me—but yet I said I would manage to help them. I paid for them that Monday, till we were arrested in the afternoon. From then up till Friday I paid for the meals of the man and his brother-in-law sent up from the hotel to the gaol. I was indeed sorry for them. On Friday I heard that the woman had told the nurse that they had their bank-book with them (Savings' Bank), and had a sum to their credit four times larger than all I possessed at the time. I accordingly told the man that I could no longer pay for him, but would help them get their money from some one in Zeerust; and I succeeded, too, in doing it. However, this action of mine gave umbrage to the stingy Scotchman. I received no word of thanks, and he began grumbling over the few privileges

granted to me, and not to him. In the village his wife all at once turned Transvaaler and complained bitterly that I, their benefactor, mind you, enjoyed privileges which he did not. This pair thus ably abetted the other *man* and *woman* I told about. But worse: from questions put to her this woman gathered that the Government was eagerly looking for proofs of charges they were anxious to make against me, so as to justify my capture and detention. The officials were thirsting for my blood, and were determined to have me court-martialled and shot. Talk to this effect was soon prevalent on the streets, and one of their miserable papers had a paragraph to that effect, too, gloating over my coming end. This woman was allowed to come and see her husband every day in prison; she told him about it, and to revenge themselves on me for my generosity to them, I suppose, they concocted a vile plan. What added to their spite was the following. This ganger used to walk up and down in the prison corridor every day after lunch with a pair of frightfully creaking boots. He was kindly asked to desist, but in vain. I then spoke to him too, for I knew not that he bore me a grudge, but also in vain. Then I told him, as also did the other prisoners, that we would have to complain to the gaoler, as every one wanted a moment of quiet

after lunch. This caused the old curmudgeon to fly into a passion and swear at all of us and me in particular. The gaoler, hearing our story, ordered quietness every day from one to three o'clock. And now, when the woman appeared on the scene with her suggestions, the man was ready to assist. What a degrading sight!—two subjects of our beloved Queen plotting against another loyal subject! And they were clever about it, too, as I will try to show if you will accompany me back to Lobatsi for a moment. On the Friday night when the couple came to the station and took up their quarters in the waiting-room, the following happened, unbeknown to me. The police-officer in charge wanted to put a box of cartridges, for safety, in the stationmaster's room. The latter objected, however, thinking it would be too dangerous, but advised him (this is the stationmaster's own story) to put the box in the lavatory behind the waiting-room in which the ganger and his wife were. This lavatory could be reached *only through the waiting-room*. The police-officer called the Kaffir porter to take up the box and carry it into the lavatory. He and the stationmaster and this woman (who was in the waiting-room at the time) saw the porter do it. On Saturday morning the stationmaster had the box taken out again by the porter, but the woman

happened to be absent at the time. Let us go back to the prison now. Here the two plotted and arranged that she should go to the officials and tell the following story—namely, that *I* had brought in a box of cartridges into the lavatory, had dug a hole in the ground, and then hid it; and that *she had seen me do it*, without my being aware of it, and that my intention was to *arm the Kaffirs* with these cartridges. The chivalrous Government officials greedily devoured the story of this traitor and traitress. The gaoler is ordered to leave early the next day for Lobatsi, but he does not know for what purpose, as he privately informs me. Next morning early he is told to take the woman there, and is then informed of their vile charge against me. The good fellow afterwards told me that he did not believe it, and that when the woman was told, unexpectedly, to go with him to show the spot he could see her weaken perceptibly. Off they went, accompanied by a couple of officials. On the way the woman grew more and more uncomfortable. "But he may have taken them away," said she. Said the gaoler, "But you said he dug a hole, and that he had not come back for them on the Saturday, and that early on Sunday morning you were all captured, so they must be there, and if taken away we can see traces of digging."

The traitress, however, grew more and more restless. Arrived there, the party made her point out the spot, and, armed with spades and pickaxes, they entered the place to find—a *boarded floor* and not a vestige of a cartridge-box! To do their work very thoroughly they even broke up the floor, but not a trace. Then the men burst out in revilings and the woman into tears. And then she confessed that *I did not hide* the box; I had only *put* it there. And, later on, when confronted with the station-master's affidavit, she confessed that *the porter* had brought it in, and that I had nothing to do with it at all—in other words, that she and the man had *lied, knowing* what the result might have been for me. The creature confessed, too, to the two other ladies that she had been promised release for herself and husband if she could help them prove anything against me! And to this they had lent themselves! Another case of warming a serpent in your bosom—only this time it was two serpents.

The story had a very depressing effect upon us all. Here we were, a very small band of loyal subjects, but prisoners in the enemy's hands. And one of our party was a traitor! No wonder that after this no one ever spoke a word to the man again. He became a veritable pariah amongst us.

And the woman—[illegible] people in the village

heard of her treachery—was she avoided and shunned? Oh, no—Landdrost and Commander continued calling on her, and condoled with her, and grieved over the plan that failed! No, no, treachery is not repulsive in the sight of these officials; they practise it themselves!

Some six weeks later this miserable couple were released, with the other prisoners, who were railway men. They have gone back to the Cape Colony now, but where they are to-day I don't know. The taint of their dastardly treachery will cling to them all their lives, however.

One more remark: what harm is there, when a war is declared, and you are on your own soil, and not in the enemy's country, in hiding a box of cartridges, supposing that I had done it? Surely no harm at all. So blind were these people, however, with hatred against me, and so cruel, that they magnified mole-hills into mountains, and eagerly snatched at every rumour, even the word of a traitress. I suppose they made sure that I had hid a Maxim, too, in my portmanteau, and a bomb in my hat, and that I was just awaiting a good opportunity to blow up the whole country.

Among such officials had I fallen.

CHAPTER XIII

SOME EPISODES—LUDICROUS AND DISGRACEFUL

ALL the time I was in the Zeerust gaol I obtained but very scanty news, and that little was excessively bad. Every day an official telegram —the inevitable *official*—was posted up at the Landdrost's court. These words were masterpieces of words, *et præterea nihil.* At first when I read them myself, and later on, when told about them, I did not know whether I ought to cry or laugh. They were so funny, so false, so flighty—exquisite poetical productions. And, in addition to this official gospel, the world-renowned *Standard and Diggers' News* regularly appeared on the scene. What a beauty it was! According to these two authorities the whole English army was killed or wounded during the first week or two, whilst after every fight the Republican forces had the inevitable "five killed and seven wounded." I think the headline was afterwards stereotyped.

One Bank Holiday, in London, I spent at the Crystal Palace. Returning home, I got off a 'bus at Piccadilly Circus to walk up Regent Street to my club. At a corner two little newspaper boys were having a heated argument, which threatened to end in a fight. A third stood grinning by. Buying a paper from him, I said, "What are the youngsters wrangling about?" With a twinkle in his eye, his answer leapt forth: "Oh, sir, 'tis only the exuberosity of the verbosity of the 'oliday!" I cannot describe these official telegrams and this newspaper better than in my young friend's terms—any amount of *exuberosity of verbosity*, and nothing more. But seriously, deceiving the people like this certainly was not a feat worthy of a Government always professing its dependence upon God and His providential care. It was a shame.

It was amusing to read continually "The fall of Mafeking" imminent! "The last hour has struck." "The doom is sealed." At first I felt nervous and thought—will plucky little Mafeking be taken after all? Then this news became monotonous, and afterwards ludicrous. This is the month of February, and Mafeking has not yet fallen, nor is it likely that it ever will fall. Their papers to-day never even mention the name any more. Are they ashamed of their bluster and brag? I hope so.

The same thing was done in the case of Ladysmith. Its "last hour" struck continuously; twice a Government official in Pretoria solemnly informed me that "*Ladysmith has surrendered this afternoon, and the President has sent off an official to take over the booty!*" Well, Ladysmith is still standing, and from all accounts it will be relieved soon. Kimberley has already been relieved. How small our braggarts must feel to-day if they have any sense of shame left! The Government have claimed the monopoly of God's blessings and help; and newspapers, which in time of peace knew not God and His service, now talk piety by the column, and in the next lie and brag. Is this excusable, or am I mistaken? I had an idea that in Matthew v. 5 we read "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." Evidently I must be mistaken, for these people here say they are right in their view—"piety and brag" go together.

After a while it became a standing joke in Zeerust that every Sunday every burgher was to be back in the lager, for on Monday Mafeking was going to be taken. When on Wednesday or Thursday I inquired what had become of Mafeking, the answer was, "Oh, it could easily have been done, but Cronjé decided to wait, for reinforcements were coming up to help Colonel Baden-Powell, and then

he could make a grand scoop of them all!" Evidently they are still waiting, and I am really very sorry that Colonel Baden-Powell cannot oblige them. Aye, the bounce of these "officials" is simply ludicrous.

Another story is told of a well-known burgher, who, after a little bit of an attack on Mafeking—something they called "a charge on Mafeking"—was found *behind* a little hillock holding some horses. When laughed at and asked what he was doing, his answer was, "I am holding the position"—mind you, the position behind the hill! And he was one of the bullies who was hurrying through Zeerust to the front, because "they were going to take Mafeking, but were anxiously awaiting his arrival before charging. They could not get on without him."

Another youngster came home on furlough, after a few weeks of doing nothing, and bragged about the streets of what he had done. One of his yarns was that the Lord had worked a special miracle for them, for when they were fired on by the terrible Maxims, the bullets, though pattering on their breasts, fell harmlessly to the ground, not one being wounded. "Well, all I can say is," said I to my informant, "that the Lord I know is not in the habit of working miracles in *favour* of an Ananias, but rather the other way."

Another one rushed back with the story that Mafeking was burning in ten different places, and that he had seen the smoke ever so far off. I suspect the brave defenders were cooking their dinners, and the truth-loving warrior had allowed his imagination to run off with him. I do not wonder at their failing to capture any of the besieged towns—to put it plainly, the dense cloud of lies told obscured their vision and warped their judgment, and the result is *failure* writ large!

Another episode of a more painful nature was told me by the chief actor himself. It was a clergyman, and on the first Monday after war had been declared, he had gone to the scene of the fight there had been outside Mafeking on the previous Saturday. There he found, he tells me, the dead body of an English sergeant who had been shot, and whose body had not been found by the burying party. He then cut off several of the buttons of the dead man's coat, to keep as souvenirs of the war. All this he related to me with the greatest gusto. He evidently enjoyed the *fun*. I said: "Of course, you and your companions buried the dead man then, with a prayer for the relatives left behind." "N—no," stuttered my friend, "we—you see—we—er—had no time really. We were afraid they might come out of Mafeking and shoot us!"

Aye—time to desecrate a dead body but not to bury it! And the man in charge of the souls of so many people had never thought of it! No wonder this dear man could play the leading part in the following little tragedy—or comedy, if you prefer it—a few days after!

Shortly after the famous charge on Lobatsi—eighty-four bold warriors to capture some unarmed men—several Zeerust people drove out to see the battlefield! This was the ostensible reason; the real one was to pick up loot, for the Commandant was busy carrying off everything belonging to the traders there. My friend the clergyman also drove out to join in the fun. He got what he wanted and drove back to Zeerust with his loot. Imagine the picture—our clergyman has a jolly, fat, rubicund countenance. I can see him, sitting in his little buggy, driving his horses, trotting through the main street, bowing right and left, calling out, "I've got it! I've got it!" *It*—what was that *it?* It was a *Berkshire pig* in a box tied on to the back of the cart! Tell it not in Gath! On they went in triumphal procession—a shouting parson and a squealing pig! What a pair! What company for a parson to keep! Over the box every one could see the pig peep, squealing like one of his Gadarene relatives, as if possessed. On the seat sat the jolly,

self-complacent "Dominé," a hero in his own estimation, a dead soldier's coat-buttons in his pocket, a stolen pig in his cart! People laughed, but not all; they approved, but not all. Parson and pig—had I but a Cruickshank's pencil to picture the scene, or a Dickens's pen to describe it!

And this dear man was the party who, after my capture, wrote to my aged father in the Cape Colony that I was taken because I was loyal to my Queen, an act unworthy of *a true Africander!* Yes, my reader, there are such men, even at the end of the nineteenth century.

In prison we were subjected to some unpleasant experiences, too. It often happened that Pretoria youngsters, who had joined the bicycle corps of despatch-riders, passed through Zeerust. Of course, they were anxious to see the prisoners of war, and consequently often favoured us with their company. There were gentlemen among them, but alas! also arrant cads, capable of insulting a prisoner any day. Thus, for instance, some four came up one day "to see the animals feed." They were dressed to kill, and *looked clean*, which, unfortunately, they not always are. But clean clothes do not make a man a gentleman. So it was here. These youngsters were foul-mouthed and vulgar to an extent. They made a degrading spectacle of themselves. They

looked into the cells where the prisoners were having their evening meal, jeered at them, mocked them, and swore horribly. They deplored the fact that they were not allowed to shoot down these "dogs of prisoners," for they did not deserve to live. Then they came to our cell and found us, inmates of No. 1, sitting round a little table enjoying our meal. This was too much for these beardless ruffians. "Prisoners eating round a table, sitting on chairs!" Turning to the gaoler, they said, "Such good food for prisoners? The dogs ought to have only mealies and bread, like Kaffirs." My young friend Harry now looked indignant, and said, "Look here, our food is paid for, and that is very likely more than you can say of your fine clothes." (It was a known fact that many Transvaal youngsters proved their patriotism by requisitioning clothes galore for the front, where they remained to guard the rear! Such were these little creatures!) This called forth some more cursing and swearing, till the indignant gaoler asked them if they knew whom they were speaking to. He then told them who I was. I spoke never a word, just looked them up and down. They were silenced, perhaps ashamed, and slunk away. And in Pretoria they are big swells. What a miserable outlook for the future of

a country when its rising generation is of such *genre!* Even our simple-minded, and in some instances kind-hearted, warders were shocked at their behaviour. Let us be charitable: these young fools were out without their mother's leave, and being thirsty after a dusty journey had put more fire-water behind their waistcoat buttons than they were licensed to carry. Hence their disgraceful behaviour. How proud their sisters will be of them!

On another occasion, a Sunday morning, a big burgher honoured us with a visit. It was very early still, but yet even then the odour that radiated from him betrayed the fact that he had been very thirsty that morning, and that certainly not because he had abstained all Saturday evening! I was busy washing and dressing when this burly Bacchanalian stalked into my cell, without so much as by your leave even, and stood staring at me. He was the son of a commander, but had not gone forth to war, for which some very funny reasons were given. One was, he is never sober; another, he can't see any more, and will shoot his own people; and a third, uttered in a stage whisper, he is *afraid.* Never mind what was correct or not, but there he stood staring at me through bleared eyes. "Good morning," said I, but no answer. "It is going to be a hot

day," said I, but yet no answer. "I am busy dressing," I pursued, but still no answer. "Have you never seen a man wash himself?" I asked. Not a word. You see I began thinking that the man was lost in amazement, seeing another, bigger and stronger than he was, wash himself. I could see that he and a bath were very distant relatives; in fact months must have elapsed since last they had met. I could *see* that, but after a while the fact made itself known to another of my five senses too. As my sphinx would not or could not speak I too now preserved silence. After a few minutes the gaoler touched him on the arm and intimated that it was time to go. Off he walked, and when he had proceeded as far as the big door of the gaol, where he knew no prisoner could get at him, the coward broke forth in the most horrible invective against me, cursing me roundly and swearing at me horribly. I could hear it all, and could not help thinking—what a parody! Here you have a man blustering about his love of independence, bouncing about his prowess in war, informing the world that his life's blood may flow before he would surrender home and hearth. And yet, he is an abject slave to his passions and vulgar habits and a moral coward. What a degrading sight! A Government boasting of its belief that God was going to give them the

victory, and no one else, and here stood one of the defenders of that faith, maudlin drunk and swearing, allowed admission into prison to jeer at a prisoner and curse, because he was a son of one in authority, and therefore *dare* not be refused. Such is the Government of this Republic! The man's last words when he stalked away, were, "I am going to church now, and will tell all the people that I have seen this cursed Africander!" This was the burden of his revilings. "He is not a true Africander!" Just fancy, a loyal subject of his Queen, who preferred remaining true to his oath of allegiance and not break his word, by doing which he might have gained any amount of popularity and influence among these people—fancy such a man *not* a true Africander, but that drunken sot one! Away with the name, if that be true! 'Tis Africanders such as these that imperil our future as a people, that degrade us in the eyes of civilised Europe, that make one despair.... Often in my cell I lay thinking of the situation. Often I mourned the mistakes made by our leaders. Verily some of them have given sharp knives into the hands of children, who will now either injure themselves or others. To be Africander is vastly different to being a blustering braggart who knows not and understands not what he is talking about. I could have wept at the

degrading spectacle before me. It is the firm conviction of my heart that the influences at present paramount in the Transvaal—that especially of the blustering, irreligious Hollander—are admirably calculated to produce such Africanders!

CHAPTER XIV

SOME MORE OF THE SAME KIND

IT happened more than once, during the few days of comparative liberty we had, that I met some sober-minded burgher or other who discussed the situation with me calmly and sensibly. What struck me then, and afterwards, was the following sentiment often expressed. "If we knew," they would say, "that our independence would not be infringed on, we would have no objection to give the Uitlander his vote. You must not think we are fighting to please the President and his office-bearers. We don't care a brass farthing about these men. No, we are afraid of losing our independence, and therefore we fight." But my good friends forgot that it was the Government they really were fighting for, since *only* that Government and its friends had persuaded them that giving the

franchise to the Uitlanders meant losing independence. Paul Kruger and his satellites firmly believed that they alone could rule the Transvaal, nobody else. By giving the franchise to the Uitlanders they (the Government) feared that the President would not be re-elected. Hence their objection to giving it. The burghers do not all think so. All of them do not swear by Kruger and his set. They would not fight an hour to keep him in the Presidential chair if they knew that a change of President would not curtail their independence. I must say I was struck by the many disloyal expressions used against Kruger. In fact I heard many painful words. One man was discussing with me the question of my capture. I said to him that I was taken because I would not turn traitor to my Queen. Explaining the position, I said, "I would despise you if you, being taken prisoner, would turn traitor and become a British subject. No," said I, "I say, God save the Queen ; and you, you say, God save the President." With an ugly laugh and a scowl the man said, "May the devil save him ! Since he has been President the country has had no peace and no rest. We never know what is going to come over us next. No, to the devil with him ! " he repeated in great excitement. "Who brought the impertinent, miserable Hollanders into our country ? Did not

he do it?" I say again I was surprised very frequently to hear such expressions, even from officials.

What pained me grievously, too, was the awful language so many, especially the younger generation, use. Officials, commanders, burghers, and policemen I have heard roll out, on the least provocation, most glibly the Lord's name, and d . . . g everything, because everything was bl . . . y. One of them had been hurling all these epithets at a Kaffir in the public street. The Kaffir turned away and mumbled loud enough for three of us to hear, "You bl . . . y fool Boer!" Here you have in one word the relation between Boer and Kaffir pictured, and the evil influence of the one over the other. Every prisoner with us in gaol, and afterwards in Pretoria, the British officers too, specially noticed this swearing propensity of our captors. I know many that will carp at my statement, especially the clergymen, who naturally have a great opinion of the piety of their flock. My answer will be, "*You* have not been a prisoner amongst them, *I* have. *You* see them only in their Sunday garb, *I* saw them when they were themselves. And then young Transvaalia especially is a sorry specimen. My young friend Harry and all of us here could give many an illustration of a disagreeable, disappointing nature."

I referred before to jealousies at work among officials. A friend told me that he had listened to an amusing discussion on the war and some of the men connected with it. Said the man: "Three people here (Zeerust) will be rich when the war is over. One will be the Acting-Commandant, the second a Jew, and the third our village talker, Mr. W." "How so?" says the other. "Well, you see," was the answer, "what with looting and taking bribes, they must fill their pockets!" Then they discussed the matter further. Referring to Mr. G. they laughed at his shooting propensities exhibited that day when he wanted to shoot down the prisoners, which I told of in a former chapter. "Yes," said one; "was the man mad or drunk?" Answered the other most laconically, "Both!" The Jew they could not stand, and the Government came in for some strong, round oaths because it had contracted with him, a Jew, to buy up bullocks for the war, instead of with a burgher. The third, Mr. W., was the laughing-stock of all because he was such a braggart. He was great fun. "There they are waiting for me to help take Mafeking, and here I am lying ill. It's very hard." Alas! he was neither ill, nor were they waiting for him to help take Mafeking. Even with his doughty help they could not take it.

The burghers are brave men, but not all, as the following will show. The commandeering officer tells me of one who, before the war, was strutting and blustering about, telling every one of what *he* would do in the war. He would go forth armed with Mauser and *axe*, and would then shoot down the accursed English with his rifle, afterwards chopping off their heads with his trusty axe. Well, war is declared, and, feigning illness, our hero managed to escape the first conscription. When, however, after some three weeks Cronjé's mighty 6,000 had not been able to swallow plucky little Mafeking, more men were commandeered. Our hero was one of them. Unfortunately, never expecting it, he had grown well in the meantime. The official went down to his house to tell him the grand news that now at last he would have a chance to slake his thirst for blood. The thirsty warrior, however, flew into a passion, swore at the President and the Landdrost, and the official, and everybody. Aye, he was terribly indignant, this doughty knight of the axe. No protestations helped, however, and he is now still at the front, assiduously taking up a position at the rear, carrying a stone with him to sharpen his axe on, when one day he gets a chance to practise his prentice hand at decapitation!

I must not forget a little newspaper tit-bit. We

all know what happened at Dundee. With a magnificent flourish of trumpets that truthful Jeames of a paper, *The Diggers' News*, reported that "Lucas Meyer's forces *retreated*, but the English *fled* from the battlefield." And this after the generous let-off the Republic's forces had that day! Won't the generous English commander, who spared them then, feel sick when he hears his action thus described? I have always been taught that a brave enemy is generous. What must I think then of Transvaal bravery when their leaders can act ungenerously?

But enough of these episodes for the present. Let the next chapter tell of the further development of my little history. I mention these things because, as the reader will understand, they do make such an unpleasant, such an indelible impression on one's mind at the time.

CHAPTER XV

ALL PRIVILEGES CURTAILED

DURING the beginning of my imprisonment several privileges were accorded me, but, as mentioned before, they were cut down gradually. The *man* and the *woman*, ably backed by others, among them dear friends of mine, men who had enjoyed my hospitality, and never scrupled to ask my help in former days, rested not till the cell door was closed upon us day and night.

I have referred to the doctor's family and their infinite kindness. There were several other kind people too. The English clergyman and his wife often sent us food and books and periodicals. Several other people, strangers to us but good Samaritans, sent flowers, coffee, potatoes, sometimes whole dinners. "How dare they!" said the great Commander Cronjé. "How dare anybody feed my

prisoners—my dogs! Let them eat prison fare!" To-day Mr. Cronjé is a prisoner himself, fortunately for him not in the hands of men like himself, but of British officers and gentlemen who know how to treat a fallen foe. But the Government officials here know not what magnanimity means. And so the good doctor first got a most impertinent letter forbidding him to give me or any prisoner food or any luxuries. Another gentleman and his kind wife had continually sent us nice things. Poor man, he was dragged off to the Hoofd-Lager to give account to Cronjé and Snymann of his evil, treacherous deed. He escaped by the skin of his teeth. A wire was sent to the gaoler, forbidding him to treat me in any way different to the usual criminal prisoner. I read this telegram myself. These poor men were so afraid somebody might show a kinder spirit than they themselves had exhibited. We thereupon took prison fare, but were allowed by the gaoler, surreptitiously, to get up one decent meal from the hotel.

The persecution, however, was not over yet. The order came that no one was to be allowed to enter another cell to have a chat. Then again, all of a sudden, came the cruel order, "Cells to be locked night and day"—and this in the summer, with its stifling heat! It was a cruel thing to do.

Three times a day we were allowed out—cell by cell —in that dirty little yard, for a quarter of an hour at a time. The inmates of one cell were not allowed to talk to the inmates of another cell. One would say we were condemned felons or murderers. Then the righteous, patriotic Government was happy. What was worst is this, that I was distinctly informed that this cruel treatment was inflicted to humiliate me and break my spirit. I am thankful to say that they never succeeded in this noble attempt. All visits, too, were forbidden; I was not even allowed to have the short Sunday service we all enjoyed so much. Outside, in the church, the people prayed, and in the lagers, we were informed, they sang psalms and prayed. But their hearts were meditating cruel deeds. Remember, reader, this does not refer to the genuine burghers. No, *their* hearts were tender. They protested both in the village and in the lager against this cruelty practised upon us. No, it was the *patriot*—I beg his pardon, the *traitor* to his country, the Government official who did all this. The people considered by them dogs of Englishmen were the good Samaritans—they themselves nobly and heartily played the parts of Priest and the Levite. No comment is necessary. Yea, "the ways of men are narrow, but the gates of heaven are wide." Many was the time then that I

softly crooned to myself the well-known "Ora Pro Nobis" :—

"Out of the dark and dreary street,
Out of the cold and driving sleet,
Into the church the folk had gone,
Leaving the orphan child alone.
Tatter'd and so forlorn was she,
They cross'd themselves, as they pass'd,
To see so frail a child
In that grievous plight
On such a relentless and stormy night!"

Our only relaxation now was a swim in the river every Saturday. It was real enjoyment. We were marched down, the stationmaster and myself leading the van, and guarded by fourteen armed men. There were then nineteen prisoners. The village people gaped and stared, but made no remarks. How I enjoyed my swim! Ever since my youth swimming has been a delight to me. And now it seemed to me as if I could drown my sorrow in that glorious swim. I must say I wished that our guards could have had, if not a swim, then a wash too. They sorely needed it. Every one of us longed for those Saturdays, and was sorry when this one solitary hour of pleasure was over, for then came the terrible "cells" again, so hot, so dreary.

The stationmaster, who had been ailing for a long time, could not stand this confinement and now fell

ill. He stated his case to the authorities and asked for parole. To his own and our surprise, it was granted him, and he was taken to the hotel. I then wrote to Cronjé, in the name of all the others, to ask that our cell doors might be left open, as the heat was intolerable. Our petition was curtly refused. The doctor and several kind people in the village interceded for us, but all in vain. The enemy was glad to hear that we suffered so dreadfully. Some six months before I had been at death's door with a sharp attack of pleurisy. My lungs needed all the fresh air they could possibly get, and this was refused me. I felt my strength going daily, and in addition the dreaded insomnia invaded my narrow cell. Oh, those nights—stiflingly hot, restless, and miserable! In the distance we could hear, every morning, the cannon bombarding Mafeking, and then, during the afternoon, the sensational reports began coming in, all retailed to us in the evening by gaoler and warders. No wonder that health and nerves failed!

To crown our misery another tragedy must needs be enacted. One frightfully warm afternoon I was lying down to get a little rest when in a passage just outside my cell I heard preparations go on of which we knew not the meaning. Soon enough, however, we did. It was a poor Kaffir, condemned to twenty-five lashes, who was being tied up to a ladder with

bared back. Then the blows descended. Oh, that horrible thud, and the yell and scream that followed the first five or six lashes! Then the poor victim just moaned like an expiring animal. And all the while the lash rushed through the air with its horrible swish, whirled by an arm that did its work with gusto. It was horrible! I can't think of it, or write of it, without again experiencing the horrible sensations of that day. I had never witnessed anything of the kind in my life before. I could not bear to hurt another myself. And here, a captive, I had to be a silent listener. To crown all, a day later two more Kaffirs were lashed on the very same spot, each receiving twenty-five lashes. It was terrible. What happened to me I was told of afterwards, for long before it was over I was unconscious.

Imagine poor Harry's sensations! He and I were alone in the cell then. There I lay unconscious, the door was locked, and outside the frightful shrieks and yells of the poor cruelly lashed Kaffirs filled the air. When it was over Harry bombarded the cell door till the guards came up. They opened the door and carried me out into the gaoler's office. Fortunately the doctor was near by. He did for me what he could, with a heart full of tender friendship and care. In about half an hour's time I revived a

little, and recognised all again. My head, however, was buzzing round and in frightful pain; I knew of nothing, and could not talk coherently. The doctor feared that my brain had given way and I was mad. Thank God! that did not come over me, though it would have delighted the hearts of mine enemies, I believe. Towards evening I was carried to my bed, and the doctor ordered the cell to be left open for the night. The mischief was done, however, and during the next two days the fits returned continually, whilst I, when conscious, felt as if I was really going mad. One afternoon, they tell me, I started up, calling out to my little boy, my Willie, whom, I said, I saw standing in the door stretching out his arms to me. I started up to go to him. Harry called for help, and he and some four or five guards held me down. I fought them, I struggled fiercely. I begged them in piteous accents to bring my darling boy to me, or let me go to him. So piteous was the scene, I was afterwards told, that Harry and the guards themselves were all in tears. Again I was carried out to the cooler and airier office. The good doctor came in haste, and what love and gentleness could do he and Harry did. I became conscious for a little, and then was mad again, talking to my little boy, trying to break away from them to go to him. At last the

doctor managed to get me to sleep with morphia. In the meantime he had wired to the lager—to Cronjé—and to the government in Pretoria, apprising them of my condition, and telling them that he feared the worst if I were not removed from that cell. And can you believe it, gentle reader, the *authorities absolutely refused.* The next day I was no better and getting very weak. And then the brave doctor, as district-surgeon, showed his teeth. He simply *ordered* my removal to the hotel, where a generous-hearted host and his wife were only too willing to play the part of good Samaritans. The doctor was ably assisted by an official I have before referred to, the Public Prosecutor—a gentleman who, I'm sure, would all along have seen to my being properly treated if only he had *dared.* He countersigned the doctor's order and had me removed. I thank this official for his courtesy shown me that day and on other occasions. Poor Harry was now left alone in our cell, but a considerate gaoler put two other prisoners, friends of ours—Messrs. Howard and Fischer—with him to keep him company.

I was now installed in a cool, comfortable room in the hotel, but so weak that I had to keep my bed for several days. The noble-hearted commanders, frightened by the doctor's reports and threats, now perforce acquiesced in the action taken by the

Public Prosecutor, and I was left in peace. A dastardly thing was done, however. An *official* telegram was published to say that I was somewhat indisposed, "and had been taken to the *hospital.*" There is no hospital in Zeerust, and my hotel bill I had to pay myself, the kind owners making it as low as possible. The Government officials deliberately told a falsehood and then took credit for a charitable action never done by them!

The next chapter will tell about my "hospital" experiences. As I said, I was laid up, but still guarded—one guard sitting outside in the passage at the door, and another outside before the only window of the room. In fact, the doctor had great difficulty to keep them from sitting down day and night *inside* my room.

CHAPTER XVI

IN HOSPITAL

I COULD breathe in my new quarters, and see kind faces again. I was not allowed to see visitors, but the people of the hotel and the doctor were with me continually. The nurse and Miss R. were allowed to come in for a minute just to say goodbye, for the day after they were taken to Pretoria by coach, whence they were sent over the border, *viâ* Delagoa Bay.

Great kindness was shown me, and soon I began to be myself again, the attacks and frightful headaches leaving me altogether after a few days. My window looked out on a beautiful garden. How I enjoyed the green trees and flowers, and the general air of peace, amid all the turmoil of spirit within and the fierce roar of war without! Even in my bedroom I could hear the boom of distant cannon. After a while I could read a little every day, and

then sit up in my room, and finally go into the garden for a little change, as I was not yet very strong. Every day the good doctor paid me a long visit—how I enjoyed these visits, how I appreciated them!

I had not been long in prison when information came from Pretoria that all the prisoners were to be sent thither. One half was sent off first, and the other half had to follow. I too was informed that I would be taken there as soon as I felt strong enough. The thick-skinned Government was evidently beginning to feel a bit nervous regarding the opinion of its people and others outside the State about the barbarous treatment accorded us. Hence this change. A little paragraph was inserted in the two papers to say that I was simply a prisoner of war—a political prisoner, giving people to understand that I was treated as such—another falsehood, perpetrated just to allay the fears of relations and friends in the Transvaal and everywhere else. Yes, it is but too true—"man's inhumanity to man makes countless thousands mourn."

My guards were an object lesson. There they sat before the window and the door, staring at me, afraid that if they removed their eyes for a moment I might vanish into thin air. One pair of guards never ceased talking, either to me or to one another;

another pair never talked a word—they deemed it part of their duty to preserve the silence of the grave. During the night they slept by turns, but usually made such noises, both asleep and awake, that it took me several nights to get accustomed to the groaning and the grunting and the snoring, and then again the jabbering. And all along—the farce of it!—each one was armed with a rifle and a revolver and fifty cartridges. I never knew before that I was such a dangerous animal. I ought to be proud of the estimation I was held in and the value put upon me. Really, it was too funny! I verily thought that I must be the "Prisoner of Zenda," or "Rupert of Hintzau," whom they feared so terribly.

In a fortnight's time I was able to travel, and so decided to go with our second batch of prisoners. The doctor was anxious for me to go. He hoped that I would be quartered with the officers at Pretoria, but knew not what might happen if I stayed at Zeerust—very likely solitary confinement would be my share. And so it was decided that I should go. When all this had been arranged I received a visit from the Landdrost, greatly to my surprise. I had known him before and he me, but he had pretended not to know me. Now that I was going away, however, he came to see me and condole with me, and assure me that, on arrival at Pretoria, I

would either be released or quartered with the British officers. Well, it was kindly meant, and I freely forgive him any indignity put upon me before. He was the man who soundly rated the gaoler for allowing me to take my mattresses into my cell. Like other prisoners, said he, I ought to have been made to sleep on the ground. But I forget all that now. He meant to be kind when I was ill. And on the day I left he again came to say goodbye very heartily.

On the day of my departure a doctor, whom I had known years before, and who had just come in from the lager, came to see me, very kindly, and with him came the doughty stay-at-home Acting-Commander, who wanted to shoot us the day their messenger was so right royally treated by Colonel Baden-Powell in Mafeking. He was so polite and affable—one would say he had all along treated me as one gentleman treats another. My friend the doctor would never have dreamt that this was the man who had grudged me a little food sent by friends, and some fresh air.

And yet so it was. He was a man who had to prove his patriotism by his ruffianism, and—whisper it gently!—he was the Landdrost-elect of Mafeking, the Mafeking they had still to take, the Mafeking they were taking every Monday but have not yet taken and never will, though its brave defenders

number only some 600 trained soldiers to their 6,000!

My great sorrow was that I could not say goodbye to the doctor's home circle before my departure. I felt that it might compromise them if they came to see me. After my departure obloquy would be heaped upon them for going to say goodbye to a prisoner. Nor could I go to them—it would cause the same trouble; so the doctor and I concluded it would be best not to meet. And I saw them no more, only a glimpse as the coach drove past.

The doctor saw us off, but came to my room for a last long talk early in the morning. 'Tis no shame to say that our last hand-grip brought a mist to the eyes of both of us. Knowing how I was situated, and had been robbed, the dear friend provided me even with money. "You may need it," said he. Aye, and I did, for did not the Philistines in Pretoria despoil us? But this is another story.

When we got into the coach several friends and loyalists pressed near, surreptitiously to shake hands and say, "God bless you." And then we were off.

CHAPTER XVII

THE JOURNEY TO PRETORIA

I WAS imprisoned at Zeerust on Monday, October 16th, and left for Pretoria on Tuesday, November 26th. The coach started at twelve o'clock. Quite a crowd saw us off, and there were a few very hearty goodbyes. The coach was crowded, and as I was very shaky still, the journey thoroughly wore me out. We had to sit three on a seat—twelve inside and ten outside. Among the passengers were two Transvaal artillerymen, young Colonials, whom I had known years ago. One was an old school-comrade, whom it was a pleasure to meet again. He and I were on the back seat, and also a hospital nurse, a Transvaal lady, whose relatives I knew in the Colony. This good nurse looked after me with great kindness. I will not forget that. I thanked her then; I do so now again. We travelled through the whole night, arriving at

Krugersdorp on the Wednesday morning at nine o'clock, and during all that time she tried to make me comfortable with pillows and rugs. Whenever there was a relay of horses she managed to get me a little milk or soup. She was really a good Samaritan, and naturally I was very grateful. I was very weak and in great pain, and not very happy. God bless the kind nurse and other kind friends who helped me during that wearying journey.

Arrived at Krugersdorp, the Landdrost there, too, an old friend from the Colony, showed me and Harry much kindness. At two o'clock we left by train for Pretoria. At the Krugersdorp station a large crowd was assembled. Among the people I recognised many well-known faces. Many came up to shake hands and say a kind word—but many also turned their backs upon me. At about 7.30 in the evening we arrived at Pretoria, and were all taken to the common gaol, and locked up in the room where the Reformers, after the Jameson Raid, had been locked up. I was kindly treated by most of the officials there, as well as at the station. A crowd had assembled to see us arrive, and one could not help overhearing many remarks. A woman said when some one had pointed me out to her, "And what will they do with him? I am so sorry for him." A big bully standing close by said

thereupon, "Give him to me and I will soon show you what to do with him!" "What?" said several voices eagerly. "I will hang him on the nearest tree till he is dead," said the gallant champion of liberty! He fights for liberty—his own—so he says, but no other man may be free or dare think for himself! This is their idea of liberty. Poor deluded people.

I can assure my reader I was glad of a bed that night, and had a fairly good rest.

In the *Diggers' News* of that day I found three little bits of news, which I give below. They show the exact character of the paper—dislike of truth and narrow-minded hatred.

First of all there is a telegram from Zeerust: "A second batch of prisoners, amongst whom is the Rev. Adrian Hofmeyr, left by to-day's coach for Pretoria."

Then comes this telegram from Pretoria: "Nineteen civilians detained (that is very good) by the burghers on the western border, and subsequently sent to Pretoria, were released this afternoon, and were supplied with passports for Delagoa Bay (without food, however). The Rev. Adrian Hofmeyr is seriously ill, and is suffering from melancholia. He will be quartered in the State Model School."

The funny part is that I have never in my life suffered from melancholia. I do not know what it means.

Now comes the editor's own bit of news—first the falsehood, then the spite. Here is the tit-bit :—

A MINISTER IN PRISON.

"Adderjan Hofmeyr, formerly clergyman, but now sleeping partner of the firm Rhodes, Chamberlain & Co., has arrived at Pretoria.

"His ex-Reverence is accommodated at the expense of the State in the Grand Hotel of 'Oom Koos' (the gaoler), on the corner of Koch and Skinner Streets, where all the cells are provided with iron bars, whilst a gallows to accommodate visitors, is kept in readiness."

How charmingly delicate! what an example of ultra-refinement in literature! what a proof of the broad, yawning chasm there lay between the writer and barbarism! Poor man! and he is a renegade Scotchman, I hear, on trial for patriotism—Transvaal Government double-barrelled patriotism. How hard it is for him to hide the stuff he is made of! I do feel sorry for him. My only comfort is he is in congenial society, very congenial—German Jews and Transvaal liars!

On the morning after my arrival Harry and I

were placed in a little room, which I thought was going to be my home for the future. Everything we had had been taken from us—knives, scissors, note-books, even our money. When I asked the acting-gaoler—a very kind young man—why that too was taken away, his immediate answer was, "Ah, sir, you see if we leave money on prisoners they might bribe the goalor or the warders!" You see, reader, bribery and corruption are not unknown here—oh no. The Reformers who were imprisoned here in '96 could a tale unfold.

A real little bit of happiness and joy fell to my share at about twelve o'clock, when three Government officials, appointed to look after the British officers, visited us to liberate Harry and the other prisoners who were railway men. I was indeed happy and glad that after *seven* weeks of injustice and cruelty the Government had at last awakened to a sense of decency. We then heard that the ladies and the stationmaster and the other railway men, among them our friend Lombardini, had already been sent to Delagoa Bay. I was so glad for Harry's sake that I forgot all my own misery. The glorious constitution of this Free Republic, having the *shadow* of liberty, without any of the *reality*, had made it possible for its minions to capture one man *before* war was declared, and then three in-

offensive women shortly after, one a hospital nurse too, *and keep them prisoners for seven weeks.* Nurse Ruth had a good sum of money on her. This was taken—I beg pardon, *stolen* from her at Zeerust. I wonder whether it was ever restored to her. The liberated prisoners were sent to Delagoa, and from there they had to manage as best they could. I had to borrow £20 to pay Harry's expenses to the Cape. And then the dear President still tells his people that they are a chosen people! Comment is not needed!

I was now informed that the Government had decided to quarter me in the Model School, where the British officers had been accommodated. A meeting of the Executive Council had been called to consider the question, I was told, whether I should languish in gaol, or be sent to the Model School. Yes, the whole machinery of the State was stopped, even the war was forgotten, while this momentous question was being discussed! Up rose one of the fathers and proposed that I should be sent to the racecourse, where the privates were imprisoned. "Don't we hate this man and, though we are perpetrating an injustice, showing all the world that we are unfit to govern and have no idea of the true meaning of the word liberty, should we not, having treacherously captured him, treat him as cruelly

as possible?" "No," says another Civis Romanus, a noble patrician—"no," says he; "the racecourse is too good for him. True, we have acted disgracefully, but we are accustomed to such action; we have disgraced ourselves by committing an injustice, but this is not the first time—we speak a great deal about right and liberty, but we never allow it or recognise it in another—therefore, I say, let this man lie in prison. Has he not dared—aye, dared—to differ from us, and, more horrible still, to say so in public yonder in Diamondopolis? To prison with him!" (Sensation.) The vote was about to be taken, when slowly the President rose to speak. He had a Bible under his arm. "*Patres conscripti*, fellow-slaves of a Hollander-ridden and Leyds-guided Government, monopoly-granters and spider-receptivants, listen! This Book says, 'Love your enemies.' We have disgraced ourselves by taking him and his companions prisoners; let us rectify our error, after seven weeks of *unavoidable* delay." (He coughed slightly over the word, but a firmer grip of the Book restored confidence.) "Let us now show our love to our enemy, not by doing justice to him—it is against our principles so to do; we can't, even if we tried to—no, but by quartering him with the officers and not sending him to the racecourse, or to gaol, where

he has already been for seven weeks. Listen to my inspired words of wisdom. And now let us rejoice that we are not like other men. *I* do not *say* we are better than they, I leave that for you and my trusty printers of the *Volksstem* and *Diggers' News* to say!" And then they sent three officials to take me to the officers' quarters, whilst they themselves went home, having strained so mightily the quality of mercy that they were quite exhausted!

I demanded from these three gentlemen the reason of my capture and detention. Their unblushing answer was, "*Your Kimberley speeches!*" O land of liberty and free speech, thy name is *not* Transvaal!

And so I entered upon a new phase in the story of my captivity.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE STAATS MODEL SCHOOL

THIS building is a very fine one, consisting of sixteen large rooms, twelve of them of one size, about 30 feet by 40 feet, and four of a size twice as large. A long corridor, some 9 feet wide, runs from end to end along the length of the building, and a shorter one, some 12 feet wide, at right angles to it, through the width of the building. One large room is excellently fitted up as a gymnasium. The building stands in a plot of ground of about the size of an acre. Outside this we were not allowed to go. We were fenced in, on two sides (on the street) by iron railings, and the other two by iron fencing, and were guarded by nine armed policemen—Mauser and revolver. A change of guard takes place every four hours. Just next door is a Red Cross Hospital, in which building our gaoler and his assistant have their guard-room.

Our gaoler is a Mr. Opperman, one of the Transvaal burghers. In time of peace he is a criminal magistrate (Landdrost). Now he goes by the title of "Commandant van de Wacht (Commander of the guard, of the prisoners). He is a short, thick-set man, generally very curt and uncourteous, and a terrible hater of the English. He shows his lack of intelligence and commonsense by believing that if the country is conquered by us he will be shot and his wife degraded to the rank of a servant. He consequently talks of shooting himself and her first before it comes to that. He has never bestirred himself to show the prisoners any legitimate kindness. He always tried to look down upon men infinitely his social and intellectual superiors, and naturally always failed. Nobody ever took any notice of him.

His assistant was a Dr. Gunning, a Hollander, who had lived in the Free State for many years, and a thorough gentleman. He is the curator of the Staats Museum. He ought to have been our head gaoler; I am sure things would then have run much more smoothly.

The police who guarded us were as brutal a lot of men, with very few exceptions, as one could find in a day's march. They deserve a separate chapter, and will get it.

This will give the reader some idea of our prison and its surroundings. Our walk was a tramp round and round the building. In one-half of the back-yard rounders were played, in the other half the tents of the police and our servants (privates from the different regiments) were pitched. Later on, in the month of March, these police tents were taken out and placed in the street, to our great relief. The close proximity of these men was anything but pleasant or edifying. The building itself was rather badly ventilated for a school, but fortunately the rooms were very lofty, about 16 feet, and thus by leaving doors and windows open night and day, we really did not feel the summer heat severely at all.

When I arrived I was prisoner No. 54, and was put into one of the rooms all by myself till the middle of December, when the Stormberg disaster took place, supplying me with fellow-prisoners as companions in my room, to my great joy and comfort. I had often felt very lonely in that big schoolroom.

A considerate enemy, gloating over our capture, provided us daily with food about enough for half a day — a half-pound of meat and one pound of bread, and in addition we were supplied with tea or coffee and potatoes and salt. Everything else had

to be bought, such as milk at 6d. per bottle, and sugar at 1s. 6d. to 2s. 3d. per pound. An officers' mess was consequently formed. To have anything like a decent and healthy table our expenses amounted to from 2s. 3d. to 3s. per day. On arrival every prisoner was provided with a free issue of clothes, bedding (a mattress and two rugs) and a towel. Our gaoler, however, never hurried over this; the comfort of an officer who arrived here after a long journey, tired and hungry, was a matter of no consideration. Officers have arrived who had to wait as long as *two* weeks before *anything* was given them, not even bedding. *Seven* weeks passed before I received my free issue of clothes. Our captors took a delight in inflicting these little annoyances on us. It did their little souls good. Everything we wanted had to be bought through a certain appointed party. He, of course, had to distribute "palm-oil" very freely. Ugly whispers were heard as to the parties who stretched forth hands to be oiled. But you see, there was no disgrace in pilfering defenceless prisoners. And as we bought monthly for as much as £800, the clean-handed officials, you may be sure, made a tidy penny by us. One room was reserved as a store, and two of the officers kindly acted as store-keepers, thus sacrificing a great deal of their

time. It was indeed a generous action on their part.[1]

The building, facing west, was provided with a large verandah, both in front and at the back. These places naturally were the daily resort for readers and writers and chess-players, &c. We were provided with two bath-rooms only, and when our populations reached the number of 120, plus the twenty-three servants, these baths were kept fairly busy. Two pumps in the yard supplied us with fresh water, and washing-day was quite a feature — colonels and majors and captains, in all sorts of costumes, with buckets and tubs and soap, washing away for dear life! Some of our guards, showing a lamentable ignorance of the advantages of clean water and cleanliness, considered all this a terrible waste of soap and energy. Why could we not go about in one suit of clothing for three or four weeks? One does not need a change oftener! This was their creed. The authorities evidently had a hankering after the same opinion, hence their unwillingness to supply more bath-rooms. By crowding the bedrooms somewhat we were able to reserve one large room as a fives-court. This game, with rounders and the gymnasium, provided athletic exercise for all who

[1] The monthly expenditure later on amounted to £1,600.

desired it. The fives-court was the scene of many an interesting tournament between representatives of the different regiments and public schools. We managed to get up a great deal of excitement over these games, making the days pass fairly pleasantly.

On my arrival we were allowed the use of the school harmonium—a very good instrument. I can play and sing a little, and several of the officers too sing. And thus many a pleasant evening was spent. My relatives and friends sent me lots of music, and many were "the songs that reached our hearts." Alas! this was happiness too great to last. On a certain day, quite unexpectedly, our harmonium was taken away. The people in the town, we were told, the bigoted ones, objected to hearing us sing and having a little bit of sunshine in our lives. Some cantankerous individuals had even spread the report that I had played "God save the Queen" and "Rule Britannia," and that too on Christmas Day. A friend, who had come from the Ladysmith lager, told me that the report had been spread even there, and that I had been roundly cursed and sworn at. Can one imagine anything smaller, more childish than this?—and, worse still, that Government officials should lend an ear to such nonsense? No wonder they are fighting for liberty; the pity only is that they have mistaken the enemy—they are fighting the

wrong party. On Christmas Day we had a solemn service, and in the evening sacred music. Several songs were sung. Last of all, at the request of the hospital people next door, I sang Lord Henry Somerset's "Song of Sleep," and then we all retired. Somewhere in the vicinity of the school, in the house of English people very likely, some one—a child perhaps—had played "Rule Britannia." A truth-loving, patriotic passer-by then immediately rushed off to the President and told him that *I* was playing patriotic airs, when, as a prisoner I ought to sit down in sackcloth and ashes. *Hinc illæ lachrymæ!* The Duke of Plazatoro could not have acted more foolishly and with less dignity. Verily there are little-minded people in this world of ours, with souls so small and mean that only microscopic inspection will reveal them. Ever since my arrival here I have had the pleasure of conducting a service on Sundays. The officers honoured me by asking me to give them a short address every Sunday. It has been an honour and a privilege to me to do so. Many solemn but also pleasant hours were thus spent. Let me tell about them in another chapter.

So much for the present of life in the Staats Model School.

CHAPTER XIX

SUNDAY

HOW shall I describe our Sundays and our pleasant services? There are memories, sad and sweet, connected with those short hours which will never be effaced, I am sure.

Till my arrival a clergyman of the English Church used to come of a Sunday to conduct a service, and after my arrival he still came for a few Sundays, but on Churchill's escape (of which we will hear later on) he wrote the officers a very curt and curious letter to say that in consequence of that escape he could no longer conduct a service, as he had to guard the honour due to his position. I will not criticise the reverend gentleman's motives nor his letter. I can understand neither. So let it pass. The officers then desired me to continue the services, which I gladly consented to do.

Our hour of worship was eleven o'clock, and till

Christmas Day, as we have seen, we had the use of an American organ. I acted as organist too. We turned our large mess-room into a temporary church. A schoolmaster's desk did duty as pulpit. We spread a table-cloth over it and put a flower, growing in a pot, on it, and I am sure no domed cathedral could have solemnised hearts and minds more than our homely arrangement did. The singing was hearty, and my short addresses had no other merit than that they were simple, straight talks from the heart to the heart, words of good cheer and comfort. At the request of several of the friends I am preparing these short addresses for the press, just as a memento of hours pleasantly spent here.

After Christmas Day the organ was peremptorily taken away, and so I led the singing every Sunday, and we enjoyed it, and praised God heartily, to the disgust of some of the officials, I am afraid. Why? Let me tell you. After my first service, conducted November 26, 1899, the question was debated amongst the authorities whether I should be allowed to continue such ministrations. A relative of mine was made use of to hint to me that I should discontinue this Christian work, as otherwise I would imperil my chances of release. When I desisted not I was informed by an official that the Government had

decided to forbid me to preach, nor would it allow the English Church clergyman to come either. The day after I was again informed that *I* might conduct a service, but if I prayed for her Majesty the Queen I had also to pray for his Honour the President. I said to my informant that I had had no idea that the President was at all desirous of my prayers, for I knew he hated me, but that *my* religion taught me to pray even for those "who despitefully use you," and that therefore I was quite prepared to grant his request. Possibly the letter written by the English Church clergyman was the outcome of a similar talk had with him. I can't say. About a week after the same official again expostulated with me for taking the service. Amongst other things he had the bad taste and disgusting animosity to say, "You ought rather to pray that every d . . . d Englishman might be sent to h . . . l at once, than to preach the gospel to them." In my wrath I made answer, "You might perhaps find a clergyman in the Transvaal capable of entertaining so *cowardly* an idea, but *nowhere else*." And then I turned my back on him and walked off. And these are the people who speak of liberty. Alas! they have not the slightest idea of the fundamental meaning of the word. Does not its most glorious application and intensest signification arise from a clear under-

standing of our grand Christian maxim, Do unto others what you wish that they should do unto you? I am sore afraid that this grand truth is a neglected and forgotten one in some Transvaal circles.

I continued my services, now knowing that a bad mark had been placed behind my name. An Africander, how dare he preach to accursed Englishmen! Did this feeling die away? By no means. As late as the month of March an official told me that great disgust was expressed outside, in the town, because I had not refused to continue these services. One remarked, "It is clear that his imprisonment has not yet made a Transvaaler of him—his spirit is still unbroken!" Aye, I was imprisoned because they wanted to cow and frighten me; and to be Transvaaler means to *hate* your enemies and do them evil. I am afraid, if this is true, that the last thing I would like to be is Transvaaler.

Thank God the *genuine*, real Transvaaler is not of this calibre. He is a brave man and therefore generous. It is the town-bred burgher, the younger upstart class, the man who has imbibed infidel ideas and learned drinking and swearing habits from the worst Hollander importations, who speaks thus, poor fellow!

After our organ had been taken away we

petitioned again and again for an instrument, even though it were allowed on Sundays only. We offered to hire one ourselves, if the school harmonium were begrudged us. I too wrote again and again from New Year's Day onward. On March the 8th I received an answer for the *first* time, saying that we would be allowed to hire one, and use it *for sacred music only*. How glad we were of this boon at last granted unto us, as a man throws a dog a bone. But even after that it took us days to get in the harmonium, which we had to buy, as none could be had on hire. And thus on the next Sunday we had an instrument again, and how we enjoyed our singing every lover of music will understand. How heartily the "Church's One Foundation" pealed forth, how tenderly our "Hymn for Absent Friends," given on p. 128! Aye, our hearts were mightily stirred.

Yes, I am certain of it—we may forget many days and many incidents of our prison life; but few, if any, will ever forget our happy, blessed Sunday services. How they cheered our hearts, giving us new courage and faith; how they helped to still the tumult of impatience and anger within; how they softened our hearts, especially when the prayer "for the absent, for those near and dear unto us" solemnly ascended on high. God did indeed bless us richly.

Several of the officers belonged to the Roman Catholic Church, but no priest was allowed to conduct a service for them. The clergymen of my own Church, the Dutch Reformed, I blush to relate, simply ignored the fact that any of the prisoners might perchance have a soul worth caring for; not even our sick and wounded. More about this, however, later on.

From the beginning of February we have been singing every Sunday the following hymn. The wife of one of the officers here, with kindly forethought, sent her husband a copy of it, as also of the prayer daily used in Westminster Abbey. We made copies of that hymn, and used it, as well as the prayer, every Sunday. They always stirred our hearts mightily. Our copies of Hymns Ancient and Modern did not contain this hymn.

The services I was thus privileged to conduct will always remain to me the bright spots, the happy hours of my prison life. I can never forget them, nor the kindly words of appreciation so often spoken by the officers, my fellow-prisoners.

"HYMN FOR ABSENT FRIENDS.

Holy Father, in thy mercy
Hear our anxious prayer;
Keep our loved ones, now far absent,
'Neath Thy care.

Jesus, Saviour, let Thy presence
Be their light and guide.
Keep, O keep them in their weakness
At Thy side.

When in sorrow, when in danger,
When in loneliness,
In Thy love look down and comfort
Their distress.

May the joy of Thy salvation
Be their strength and stay.
May they love and may they praise
Day by day.

Holy Spirit, let Thy teaching
Sanctify their life ;
Send Thy grace, that they may conquer
In the strife.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit !
God ; the One in Three,
Bless them, guide them, save them, keep them,
Near to Thee."

Note.—Let me add here that on Sunday morning, March 11th, before service, the following note was put in my hands by Colonel Hunt :—

"DEAR MR. HOFMEYR,—Your fellow-prisoners of war beg that you will accept the recently purchased harmonium as a small acknowledgment of the help you have been to them both by holding the Sunday services and by your ever cheerful sympathy. They hope that, though the time for its

use here may be short, you may be able to find some useful purpose for it in connection with your future work.

"Yours very sincerely,

"H. HUNT, Lt.-Cl.

"For the officers at the Staats Model School."

I need not say how surprised and overwhelmed I was by this generous gift and great kindness of the friends here. I could not but most sincerely thank them, and wish them in turn God's richest blessing. It was then we sang so heartily and feelingly, "The Church's One Foundation is Jesus Christ Her Lord."

CHAPTER XX

AN ESCAPE

LOOKING through my little memorandum-book I find entries like the following, which will give an idea of what our life here was like up to the evening of "the great escape." I read this, for instance: "Since Saturday, 27th Nov., newspapers are allowed us. These say that I am going to be released soon. Is it true? I doubt it very much." "Several of my relations call and send me fruit and flowers." "My health is improving, though my head still troubles me very much." "American Consul called, but says he never received my letter of appeal addressed to him as protector of British subjects. The authorities here are quite capable of suppressing a letter." "Music is my great solace. What happy, happy hours we pass, singing the old songs over again! How nice our Sunday services are too!" "Had fine rains of late. Heat has prac-

tically passed away. Hope it won't return again." And then I come to this extract: "Wednesday, Dec. 13.—Great excitement. Churchill escaped last night." Yes, it was a great to-do; it stopped the whole machinery of state. It paralysed the officials. It seemed to me that even the war was forgotten. Let me tell the story.

On their arrival here the officers had asked for parole. This was refused them. It was reported at the time that this refusal was mainly due to the representations of one Consul, representing a European Power, who informed this Government that "a British officer has no honour," and that therefore parole should be refused. Naturally such a statement was eagerly seized upon, and action was accordingly taken. I cannot reveal the name of the Consul, for I am not sure of the fact. Some officials here think nothing of telling a falsehood. I can therefore only after the war verify the story, and expose the "gentleman," if it is true.

On account of this refusal escape talk became rife. Many were the plans concocted. During the first week of December two of our servants had managed to escape, no one of the authorities discovering it for a fortnight at least. This added fuel to the escape flame. In a short time the plan took shape and form, and it was known to all our little com-

munity that Mr. Winston Churchill and three officers had made up their minds to escape. Their plan was to try during the dinner hour—seven to eight—to elude the guard in the back yard, scale the fence behind the offices, and then try to get on a goods train. Fortune favoured Churchill that Tuesday evening. Unnoticed by the guard he got clear away over the fence. Unfortunately, the guard turned too soon for the others to get over also. One had already begun to climb the fence when the guard noticed some disturbance and came nearer. He therefore had to come down. This was a great disappointment to them, for no other chance offered that evening nor after. Churchill had provided himself with the Transvaal colours, which were easily smuggled in, so vigilant was our gaoler! These he put on his hat—it was my soft felt hat, too, for he had only a pith helmet—and thus armed he coolly walked the Pretoria streets till about 10.30 that night. Then he went to the railway station and managed to get on a truck of a goods train just drawing out. He travelled on this till near daybreak, got down and hid himself till night came on again. Then he again boarded a train and thus, travelling by night, and hiding by day, he reached Delagoa Bay and was safe.[1]

[1] Mr. Churchill tells his story in his very able book on his war experiences.

The next morning—Wednesday—it was discovered here that our friend had got away. It came about thusly. A little barber man used to come once or twice a week to shave and cut the hair of members of our little colony. Unfortunately, Churchill had made an appointment with this little man for Wednesday morning. At eight o'clock the tonsorial artist, a little Hollander, appeared on the scene accompanied by a policeman. He knocked at the door of the empty cage, in vain, of course. Sorely afraid of losing his sixpenny fee the little man ran up and down the building, interrogating every one he met. Some gave him no answer, just looked him up and down, the little there was of him; others referred him to the most unlikely corners; a third said, "In his bath." And so outside the bath-room barber and bobby took up a strong position, holding it against all comers for fully half an hour. Then it struck the little man that perhaps they had been guarding an empty bath, so he knocked gently and apologetically. No answer. A louder, rather self-assertive knock then. Still no answer. And so a loud, peremptory, taking-no-refusal knock came, but yet no answer. Bobbie then ventured to turn the knob and open the door inch by inch, peeping in gingerly. Is the man perhaps dead? Has he cut his throat? What ghastly sight am I doomed to

see? He opens the door a little more. There is no one. It is a little room of about 8 feet by 3 feet. Yet he examines carefully. Under the bath? No. Behind the door? No. Under the chair? No. He gets wild and excited. He examines sponges and towels. Under these, perhaps? No. Where, then? Bath and water, soap and towels are there, but where the bather? Consternation is now changed into panic. The gaoler is called; the guard is alarmed; there is bustle and confusion. We are all asked when we saw Churchill last. "Last night" was naturally the universal answer. So cocksure had the authorities all along been of the utter impossibility of escape, and of their superior intelligence, that they never even called a roll. Our chief gaoler, who naturally was in a great stew, was sure that he had seen the fugitive out under the verandah as late as 10.30 the evening before, which, to put it mildly, was a cram, for the grand *coup* had come off at 7.15.

The fact was recognised now that our friend *had escaped*, and the higher authorities were notified. The Field-cornet, the inspector of police, and some more big bugs came down to investigate the matter. The Field-cornet, a big, burly fellow, was in a great rage. He came to my room—I was still alone then—with our first and second gaolers to ask me when *I*

had seen Churchill last. Of course my answer, too, was "Last night." The big man then said to the two trembling gaolers: "Well, you must produce Churchill; if not General Joubert will hang you!" He looked daggers at them, and they shook. And now the play moved on right merrily. Wires were sent all over the country, and the houses surrounding the Model School were searched. Even the house of our doctor gaoler was searched, forsooth, because his wife is an English lady. Right airily the officials informed us that "Of course he can't escape; he will be caught soon enough, and then put in prison, and very likely all the officers too." The big, blustering Field-cornet went so far as to say, "Churchill is a blackguard; he gave his parole, and that is the way he keeps his English word of honour." Well, *Churchill* was not the blackguard. Somebody else was—a baffled official who takes refuge in lies! The idea! A man gives parole, and yet he is guarded by men armed to the teeth! But, you see, with some of these officials anything will do for a fig-leaf. Public opinion, they knew, would point to them for remissness, and therefore any cowardly lie would do for a subterfuge.

Vengeance was now to be taken on us—newspapers were stopped, beer also, the roll was to be called every day, no one allowed to sleep out-

side under the verandah on a warm night, and lights to be put out at 9.30 (though this latter was never done). Then *everybody* was refused admittance to the building; not even our caterer was allowed to come in for orders. Oh, there was a to-do and a fuss! Everybody and everything was suspected. A judge was appointed to hold a court of inquiry; the police on duty were changed, some being dismissed; parties were arrested on suspicion and examined—for our astute gaolers were sure that the fugitive was still in Pretoria. A nurse in the hospital, a young lady from the Cape Colony, who had never even seen Churchill, was suspected of having supplied him with a nurse's uniform. She was put over the border and sent home. Another young lady, who had passed our prison on several occasions, was arrested and examined on suspicion of having smuggled letters in or out. Yea, even a little dog was suspected of having brought in a letter in its mouth! A policeman was suspected of having sold Churchill a uniform of his, thus enabling him to escape to Delagoa Bay as a Zarp.

And the newspapers came in with their fine detective work—each one was a veritable Sherlock Holmes. The Hollander (*Volksstem*), at Pretoria, and the Scotchman (*Diggers' News*), at Johannes-

burg—well, they were going to capture him in no time. He would never escape the Argus-eyes of Transvaal Zarps—no, never! They had his picture in their windows—yea, and about fifteen times in ten days they reported his recapture, cleverly, marvellously done; and now this scion of a noble family would have to sit behind iron bars and weep. Then came the awful news, conveyed in a telegram sent by Churchill himself to one of the officials, to say that he had really escaped to Delagoa Bay, and was off to Durban. How dared he! How could he be so sharp as to elude their sharpness; so bold as to fool all his brilliant trackers, who were so hot on his scent, knowing exactly where he was every night, and going to lay capturing hands on him every morning? Aye, how dared he! The authorities pooh-poohed the news, said it was a bogus wire, the man was still in Pretoria, and would soon be laid by the heels.

For us the whole thing was a grand pantomime—a screaming farce. The authorities did act so foolishly over the whole matter, and their two brave handy men, their beautiful newspapers, making them out to be even greater fools than they were. Our poor gaoler could not, and would not, believe that the escape was a *fait accompli.* Long after Churchill had publicly addressed the public in Durban and

Maritzburg he said to me, "I don't believe that he has escaped from Pretoria. Some of the accursed English are hiding him here somewhere." This poor man could not appreciate Churchill's dash, nor swallow the bitter pill of his escape like a man. One of their men escaped in Simon's Bay from the *Penelope*, and on arriving in Pretoria was led about like a tame lion. He was brought in to see us, too, and proudly shown off. We all admired his pluck and gallantry, and nobody here or in Cape Town, I'm sure, called him names or bothered much about his escape. But then here, you see, little things trouble—well, never mind. Only it takes a brave man to admire another brave man! This Churchill escape inquiry dragged on its childish existence for months, and it was only in the month of March that a report was made by the Committee. According to one official it stated that the railway company could prove that Churchill *did not* escape by goods train. And what the railway company here (the Netherlands Company) says is gospel. But, says the report, if my official informant speaks the truth, he got off in this way very likely. An Englishman in Pretoria had asked for a railway pass for his wife, but after Churchill's escape it was found that his wife had not gone away. And when called upon to give up the pass

given her, the lady had answered that she had burned it, having no use for it. The brilliant conclusion come to, therefore, was that the English gentleman had given the pass to Churchill. But—and there are ever so many "buts"—how about the lady's name written in the body of the pass? Where did Churchill find this man, when he knew not a soul in Pretoria, and when (as we all know) no one outside was aware of his intention to escape that night. Ah, but the honour and the vigilance of gaoler and Zarp, and detective and official, in fact of the whole State, had to be vindicated, by putting obloquy on an accursed Englishman, even though they stultified themselves in the attempt, as they glaringly did in this case.

In the meantime Churchill is free and safe, and his escape is a very bitter pill for them.

Our uncourteous gaoler now became, if possible, more uncourteous still and more morose. He no longer shaved, seldom brushed hair or clothes—in fact, he looked as fierce as the famous "Wild Man of the West."

CHAPTER XXI

OUR TIME OF TRIBULATION—AND AFTER!

OUR darkest days, I think, came with the middle of December, and lasted till about the end of January.

War having been declared before Great Britain was prepared for it, the Republican forces, as was expected, had a long run of successes at the start. When, however, Sir Redvers Buller came to Natal every one hoped that the tide would turn. Imagine, then, the disappointment when the British forces met with that fatal repulse at Colenso, and when, a few day before, that great disaster befell our troops at the Stormberg. Hundreds were killed, and hundreds were taken prisoner. Our little colony of 54 at once grew to 94, and several of our wounded officers were brought to the hospital. On top of this came the Magersfontein catastrophe, when the brave Highland brigade, caught in the relentless barbed

wire, was so terribly cut up. We received the news of these catastrophes in the order I have mentioned them. Since Churchill's escape we were not allowed to buy newspapers, and were thus dependent for information on news casually heard, and a newspaper now and then smuggled in. Our gaolers delighted in telling us of reverses, but we then already had discovered that one could rely on their tales even less than on broken reeds. I will, however, afterwards devote a chapter to the methods we resorted to for obtaining news. Let me merely state here that our tribulation was increased tenfold during these dark days, by the fact that it was so impossible to obtain reliable information. On the two newspapers one could not depend. They were simply impossible, to put it mildly. For *suppressio veri* and *suggestio falsi* I have never read the like. They could give heavy odds to the French newspapers, and still win hands down. The editors could only insult the enemy, and give garbled accounts of everything. When the natives on the western border rose, the leading article hurled miserable, cowardly insults at our gracious Queen. When every generous Transvaaler—fighting at the front—admired the indomitable pluck and courage of the British soldier, these mendacious scribblers would inform the public that the Tommies refused to fight

any more, that British officers fired on their own men with their own cannon, when they were afraid to advance and refused to obey. Reports of fictitious interviews with soldiers taken prisoner were published under startling headlines, and splendid theories anent the demoralisation of the British army were built up. Once a week, regularly, the gullible public was informed that the Cape Colonials were going to rise *en masse*, that European complications were imminent, that America were going to interfere, that Russia was marching on to India.

The effect of all this on a prisoner may be better imagined that described. Speaking for myself, I am not ashamed to say that it required all my courage and determination to keep up a cheerful appearance, and always hope for better things on the morrow. There was many a sleepless night, and many a weary sigh when no one was near. When is the tide going to turn? We all along knew it would turn, no one doubted that, but often one's faith threatened to be obscured. Many were the quiet talks we had, and the discussions.

Then, too, during these dark days the authorities were particularly nasty. The Zarps were impudent and insulting, but no notice was taken of it. Every week we were told that Government was going to move us to another prison, an iron building. Our

mess committee could write letters, asking for articles promised us, necessaries of life, measures to be taken to ensure health—drainage, disinfectants—but no notice was taken as a rule, and if an answer was vouchsafed it was only after the request handed in was weeks old. To men of refinement and education all this was galling. Each one tried to fill up the time as well as possible. I studied hard—law, French, Portuguese—and taught Dutch often as much as five hours a day.

More prisoners came in, too, so that at the end of January we had about 120 all told. And then the tide began to turn.

I must not forget to mention, however, great kindness shown us at Christmas time by some Christian friends—some of the hospital nurses and outside friends. Remembering this time of peace and goodwill, their kind hearts and willing hands provided us with plum-pudding, cakes, and ever so many nice things for our Christmas dinner. Everything was nicely done, and tasted doubly well, for we partook thereof with the consciousness that nothing was begrudged us, and that other hearts were happy because we enjoyed these nice things. Yes, after all, there were some bright spots in the darkness, and some kind hearts, too!

Towards the end of January, after their Platrand repulse, and after our Spion Kop disaster, we somehow all began to feel that better news would come soon. I dreamt of it, and thought of it, and afterwards felt unaccountably sure of it—so sure, that on the last Sunday of January I said to the friends, during service, that I firmly believed that the tide had turned, and that we would not be here much longer.

And the tide did turn with a vengeance. Good news came pouring in. Lord Roberts and Lord Kitchener, who commanded round Kimberley, had arrived, and on Thursday night, February 15th, Kimberley was relieved. General Buller, too, took possession of the position between Colenso and Ladysmith, and on Majuba Day, February 27th, the latter was practically relieved. On the same day Cronjé and his thousands were taken prisoner, as also sixty-one others near Ladysmith. And history telleth what happened further.

How cheerful we all were now! In fact, there were hours when I, and I am sure many others, could forget that we were prisoners. Time seemed to fly. And the attitude of the authorities underwent a marked change, too. Towards the end of February a newspaper was allowed us again—true, it was the miserable *Volksstem* (People's Voice), and I

pity the people whose voice it is—yet its caricatures and travesties of truth amused us. Its marvellous stupidity astounded us; its horrible selfishness disgusted us. Even the wounded burghers in hospital were heard to say: "Confound that Hollander editor fellow! We have got to fight and shed our blood to preserve the country for him and those like him. All our present misery we owe these Hollanders!" Yes, the poor fellows were quite right. Had Paul Kruger, after 1881, surrounded himself by others than these Hollander importations, there would be no war to-day.

Then, too, we began to get answers to our letters and requests, and, *mirabile dictu*, a prisoner who came in shortly before Majuba Day got served with a bed and clothes *on the day* of arrival. All the others who had arrived during the dark days had to wait for days and weeks. And our gaoler, who used to go about like a roaring lion, seeking to devour us, now was intensely meek and mild.

No one, however, will soon forget those dark days. How we tried to hide our miserable feelings from one another! how we tried to cheer one another; to look round the corner to see the bright side of things; to catch, like drowning men, at any straw of good news; and to be sure that the "to-morrow" would see the aspect of affairs changed!

Aye, and it did. Right merrily the sun shone again, and our hearts were bright. As I sit down writing this the news has just come in, "The British flag is waving over Bloemfontein"!—March 13th. Our excitement can only be imagined, not described. We knew that this was coming, only the brilliant editor of the *Volksstem* could not see it. In his paper of the 12th he calls the attempt of Lord Roberts a "vain hope." Oh no, this Mr. Stay-at-home was not going to allow it! But now that it is no vain hope, but stern reality, of course this courteous, true, and imported patriot will put the blame on the Free Staters, just as he tried to put the blame of Cronjé's surrender on General de Wet (of the Free State), who, he said, ought to have relieved him (Cronjé).

I can't help it—I just can't help it—I must again say, all this would never have happened if Paul Kruger had listened to better advice, given him by his best friends, and not surrounded himself with such friends—such time-servers. When his vessel goes down they will be the first to leave him—the *very* first to accommodate themselves to the new *régime*, whatever it might be. The genuine Transvaaler knows this, and despises the put-on patriotism of the Hollander, self-advertised and belauded.

Thus the days of tribulation passed away, making

place for better and brighter ones. We passed through the deep waters bravely, I trust; and we now listen to good news gratefully, hoping that dark days will come no more again.

CHAPTER XXII

THE ZARP

THE official name for the Transvaal police is "Zuid Afrikaansch Republiek Politie." If you take the initials of these four words you make of it the word *Zarp*. This has already become a notorious word, for the man it describes is so notorious. We have had ample opportunity of studying him here, and I must say he fully comes up to all I have before heard said to his discredit. A more uncouth and cruel body of men I have never seen. For months now we have had them with us. Some thirty have been living in the back yard in six tents. They have been on guard around us day and night. We could study them closely, and a striking object-lesson they were. Let me say, at the very outset, that a few among them were fine fellows indeed, of soldierly bearing and intelligent. They were men who had seen service in Bechuana-

land and Matabeleland. But these men, though their best servants, were not trusted by the officials here. They were too courteous to us, and treated us as if we were men too and not animals. Unfortunately they did not stay here long. They were sent to the front, or to do duty elsewhere in the town. I must also add that to me, personally, all were respectful —through habit, for the people of our country are taught from youth upwards to respect clergymen. But it counts not how they treated me. Here were British officers—gentlemen—their superiors at all times and under all circumstances, and the point is, How were these treated?

The generality of Zarp is drawn from what is know as the *poor white* class. The "poor white" is, as a rule, a man who has failed at everything, either through lack of ability, or more often through laziness or other evil habits, and who now lives in the towns waiting for something to turn up, Micawber-like. These men or their sons, who closely follow their fathers' footsteps, become Zarps. Their physique is of the poorest—never an Adonis among them. Of training there is no trace, of education as little. Their personal habits are disgusting. They affect the tobacco-cud much more than the bath. They are loud-voiced and foul-mouthed. On their beat they slouch about, stand

at ease, lean lazily on the rifle or up against a tree. Smartness of walk or action and the Zarp are as yet total strangers. When on duty, standing as much as fifty yards apart, they talked to one another, bawling as loudly as possible. And the talk !— vulgar, often obscene, nonsensical, impertinent, bountifully interlarded with curses. Oh, the language they used was horrible. I have already noticed the fact that many of the officers were surprised at the bad language they heard in the lagers where they were kept as prisoners. The major of a large party of captured officers and men thought it his duty to warn the men not to use bad language, for Mr. Stead had written, said he, somewhere that it would shock the burgher horribly to hear bad language. It did not take the major and officers long to find out that their captors could swear as glibly, and even more so, than Tommy himself. Alas ! so it is. Years ago the genuine old Transvaaler would have abhorred a curse or a foul word. Now too many of the younger generation are adepts in the art. Where did they learn it ? Some shrewd guesses may be made. In the Zarp this habit has reached its acme, it seems. With him it is a refined art. He cultivates it carefully and assiduously. He swears at the officers, at the gaoler, at his companions, at his gun, at his boots, at

his mackintosh, when it is wet, at the streets, at the dogs, at the Hollanders, at the authorities, at the sun, at the moon. Yes, and when there is nothing more for him to swamp with his stream of abuse it seems to me he is quite capable of swearing at himself. And what the Zarp is on duty, he is also off duty, only more so!

And then their cruelty! This, for instance, was something they would delight in. Our prison was a corner house, and the two streets meeting at right angles on the corner were roped off as far as the grounds extended on each side. Nobody on horseback or on a bicycle was allowed to pass through these enclosed portions of the streets, only pedestrians, though not coloured ones, and then they had to confine themselves to the opposite side-walk. This was what often happened. Mr. Zarp stood on duty. A little dog comes up the street. He waits till the hapless little animal has passed, and then roars to the next sentry, with a curse, "Look out!" With that he begins hurling stones at the poor inoffensive creature, which runs off howling till it gets opposite Zarp No. 2, who stands ready with his handful of stones. With a laugh and a curse he lets the little fugitive have it. Poor thing! it has to run the gauntlet of a third humane Zarp still before it can find shelter for its battered and bruised little body.

And the three guardians of the law roar with laughter, and bawl to one another and consider themselves smart. What a pity the Royal Humane Society never hears of these dear, gentle creatures! Won't somebody inform the Society? How our blood boiled when we were forced to be passive spectators of this Zarpian ruffianism! And then a poor, luckless Kaffir comes up the street. Poor fellow! he does not know that the street is not wide enough for his Majesty the Zarp and himself, and thus walks on with that apologetic air which every Kaffir in the Transvaal wears, till he has passed the Rubicon—that rope which excludes him and forces him to walk a block round. Now you'll hear choice language, whilst with loud voice this polite Zarp explains to this benighted creature that no black man dares pass that way. My reader, this Zarp is one of the brothers Mr. Stead is so concerned about. He was our *neighbour* here, but, alas! not our *brother*. He was a being who would have delighted in shooting us down in cold blood, any day, *when our backs were turned*. With Mr. Stead it is distance that lends enchantment to the view. Had he been prisoner of war—he the champion of purity and justice—I am sure there would have been very little of the fraternal in his criticisms on them, and less in his relations towards them.

Am I too bitter in my criticisms? Then listen again. An officer, a captain, stands in the shadow of a tree waiting his turn for the bath. He stands near to a sentry, who seemed to think that the tree and its shadow were his exclusive property. How dare an officer stand in that shade too! Up he comes to him and aims a blow at him with the butt-end of his rifle. The captain walks off to complain to the gaoler, who vows dire vengeance on the Zarp—he was to be hung, and then quartered, and then burned, and then killed! "What," say we, "will justice be done?" Alas! our gaoler had but gassed —the Zarp was not even reprimanded. Officials in this country have to walk very circumspectly. You see, they might give umbrage to a man whom one day they might have need of, when another—a Hollander, very likely—through jealousy is trying to create a vacant billet into which he might step himself. Such was our gaoler—afraid to do right, for there were so many others ready to step into his shoes.

Another officer was treated in the same way by this same Zarp, and again nothing was done to him. On another occasion a lieutenant, a giant of a young soldier, stood leaning over the iron railings before the door. A Zarp had been making a fool of himself in the street, acting in a particularly uncouth

and uncourteous way, whereat the lieutenant smiled. The guardian of the law sees the despising smile and feels mightily insulted. With a stride he is at the officer's side and aims a blow at him with his rifle. Had the officer not been a prisoner, of course that fool Zarp would have measured his length in the dust, and very likely his own mother would not have known him that evening. As it was, our young giant just smiled blandly at the irate preserver of the peace and asked him if he felt better. The authorities were informed of the outrage. The Zarp, if not yet promoted, will soon be—indeed, for a time he was acting-corporal. He is one of their best men now. Did not he, a policeman, aim a blow at a defenceless man, a prisoner? Was not this a chivalrous, noble action? Ought not such an admirable Crighton to be encouraged?

More still. Standing inside the railings, at our street corner, were several officers. Some inoffensive children were passing under the rope and were soundly rated by the Zarp on duty for some imaginary misdemeanour. This brought up a look more of pity than of anger on the faces of the officers. It was too much for his insulted majesty. He yelled out to another Zarp, ostentatiously *loaded* his rifle, *left his beat*, and rushed up to the fence. He foamed at the mouth, and swore horribly, again yelled, and

then, drawing his cleaning-rod, aimed a vicious blow at one of the officers, threatening to shoot him. The blow was warded off, but the officer's thumb severely injured in the attempt. Again a complaint was lodged, and to our surprise the Commissioner of Police came a few days later to try the case. I acted as interpreter. The accused Zarp lied as if he had no immortal soul, but the Commissioner was shrewd enough to find that out, considering him guilty of a "disgraceful, mean, and cowardly assault upon a prisoner of war." His sentence was "instant dismissal, a fine of £5, and off to the front to-morrow morning." Several days later this particular bobby passed in the street before our prison looking very happy. Query: Was he ever dismissed, did he pay his fine, for he was not sent to the front? But then this is the Transvaal, and the pure fountain of justice is here—well, never mind. (Later on we heard that the man never was made to pay his fine, nor was he sent off.) There is not a little village in the Cape Colony, to speak of no other British possession, where the policeman, be he white or black, is not taught by his magistrate to be courteous to everybody and to remember that, as preserver of the peace, he has to help the public, and not to bully it. In this free country, terrorised over by a tyrannical Government, as unjustly as Russia is, and more

so, it is the other way round. The greater bully you are, the better servant of the Government so it seemed, especially if you bully the defenceless—though it be a little dog only.

I imagine the feelings of the British officer, with vivid remembrance of a courteous London policeman, when he is informed that the Zarp here represented is the best they had in the whole Transvaal. Were they not *the* police of the capital? Were not these the men who constitute the President's body-guard? Surely they must then be fit guardians of the State and of the safety of its inhabitants! Yes, and yet they were not trusted, not a soul of them. But, like master, like man. What else can you expect when justice is not a fixed quantity, but a variable factor?

But enough of the poor Zarps—the awkward squad, the battalion of bullies!

Let me remind the reader again, there were good men and true among them, courteous and brave, but they were men who had been British subjects once in the Cape or Natal, and were therefore not trusted here. If this Government but knew; *they* alone could be trusted, not the cowardly bullies left to guard us, every one of whom could have been bribed, if an officer had cared to condescend to such an attempt.

Poor Zarps—verily one can afford to pity them!

CHAPTER XXIII

DEAD

RIGHT in the beginning of the war a Transvaal Government official said to me, "We'll show the world that we are a fighting nation as well as a civilised nation."

Let us discuss the latter qualification to-day. First of all let me again remind the reader of my distinction between the real, honest Transvaal burgher and the Transvaal Government. Some eight weeks ago Lieutenant Tarbutt, of the Imperial Light Horse, was taken prisoner near Colenso. Because his father and himself had been inhabitants of Johannesburg, the Government hated him and sought to humiliate him. This was done by putting him in the common gaol in Pretoria, on his arrival. The same was done to other officers and men of that regiment. You see, this civilised Government holds peculiar ideas. One is that if you have lived in the

Transvaal, though all political rights were denied you, and though you were made to pay directly and indirectly into its treasury, without getting a vote, or any political status, yet when war came on you are expected to forswear your own country and even, though you are a British subject, to fight for the Transvaal. Woe betide you if you do not! Its President loves to preach the gospel of peace and justice. A portion of that gospel is love your enemies; forgive them. Ah! but perhaps that portion is not found in the Government version of the Bible! And so peculiar is the sinister influence of this body upon the members, that men I've known in the Colony and Free State as gentlemen of refinement and education, but who have joined the Government here, have within a year or two lost all that refinement of spirit and instinct of justice, and become as cruel and merciless as the other members of the Government, which, again, is permeated by the worst imaginable spirit of the Hollander adventurer class. When I looked upon the actions of these Colonial gentlemen I was surprised and intensely grieved. "Can these," said I, "so soon have forgotten and killed all the nobler instincts of the real Africander? Is it possible so soon to deteriorate?" Alas! it is but too true—some of them even out-Heroding Herod. Patriotism

with these, and other Transvaal Government officials, means hatred, bitter hatred of everybody who dares to differ from them. It is with them *aut Transvaal aut Nullus.* What a travesty of patriotism! And thus it was that every member of the Imperial Light Horse, because most of them had lived at Johannesburg before, were special objects of this hatred.

And so poor Lieutenant Tarbutt was sent to the common gaol, to be locked up in a miserable cell—a cell fit for a condemned criminal, a thief, or a murderer, but certainly not for a gentleman, though he was a prisoner of war. And this they call civilisation—chivalrous action towards a fallen foe! Weep, guardian angels of Transvaal!

For weeks Lieutenant Tarbutt was detained there, and, as could be expected, he fell ill of fever. You see, sanitation is everywhere at a discount here, and especially in the prison—I was there myself, I speak from experience. Imagine a fever patient in a miserable stuffy cell, in summer! But the officials gloated over it. "We'll show him what it is to fight against the Transvaal; we'll pay him out!" Such were the comments. Meanwhile our young friend grew worse, and only when after a fortnight's illness it was proved that he was suffering all the time from a virulent attack of typhoid fever did the Government remove him to a decent hospital. And he had

a father and mother in the old country, and some of these men also have children. And one could expect them to have a parent's instincts and a Christian's tenderness—that their hearts would go out to his poor mother far away, and that for her sake they would be merciful. No, their peculiar patriotism killed all such instincts. They forget to be merciful as their Father who is in heaven is merciful.

Lieutenant Tarbutt now grew rapidly worse, and, after about twelve days in hospital, died yesterday, February 13th. What a shock the news of his death was to all of us (the hospital was just next door to our prison)! So young—I believe about twenty-seven years—and now cold in death. And the horrible thought it might have been otherwise, if just and Christian treatment had been accorded him, would come again and again. If you neglect your duty to a man for whom you have to care, even though he be your enemy, and he dies, is not this called murder in every Christian country? What, then, is Lieutenant Tarbutt's death? Is it wonder that many an officer was heard to mutter the dreadful word "murdered"? It was a cruel thing to do, to cast him into that hole of a prison, and, worse still, to leave him there when he fell ill till it was too late.

The funeral took place to-day, at four o'clock in

the afternoon. Ten of us were allowed to attend it. We walked down to the English Church and took our seats round the coffin. Several people were in the church—people with charitable, kindly hearts; and as we walked up the aisle we heard many a sob, and met looks of intense sympathy. It was a solemn scene, and from our very hearts we sang—

"When our heads are bowed with woe,
When our bitter tears o'erflow,
When we mourn the lost, the dear,
Jesus, son of Mary, hear!"

The sad procession then moved off to the English Church cemetery, followed by the nine officers and myself, and a goodly number of private carriages. Arrived at the cemetery we carried our comrade's body to its last resting-place, the coffin being covered with beautiful wreaths, sent by several friends in the town. The officers of the Model School had also sent a beautiful one in remembrance of their dead comrade. When it was all over we drove back again to our prison home. It was a sad experience for us. The horrible "it could have been otherwise; it might have been prevented," would boom in our ears. Bitter thoughts would come. I had continually to quell my rebellious heart with words spoken on higher authority, "Vengeance is Mine, saith the Lord."

Aye! but the poor mother's heart and father's heart at home, and their bitter grief when one day they learn the whole truth! I could not help thinking of them. May God help them to say, "Thy will be done."

We noticed how respectful and reverent every one was as the hearse passed down the street! Hats were doffed by every passer-by. But these were not Government officials. Only one woman shook her fist at me, gesticulating fiercely. Even death could not cool her hatred. But then she is a woman, and I forgive; I have no harsh words for her.

With solemnised hearts and minds we returned to our prison. Death has entered our circle—grim, horrible death, and there are hearts that mourn for our young comrade, but a few weeks ago so strong and full of life, a veritable athlete! Now dead—dead! Was it murder?

CHAPTER XXIV

WAS IT A MISTAKE?

TO while away the tedium of prison life I opened a Dutch class for several of the officers who were desirous of learning the language. Many pleasant and instructive hours were thus spent. As reading books we used, amongst others, a little work by my brother, "Kijkjes in de Geschiedenis," and another work by him and our brother-in-law called "De Voortrekkers." The contents of these books, especially of the latter, gave rise to many interesting discussions, and to much thought during many lonely hours. As a son of the soil I have always been an admirer of the old "South African Pioneers" and of their prowess. I sympathised with them and their troubles and misfortunes. I must honestly confess I never allowed myself to hear the *alteram partem*, or think for a moment that there might have been a mistake, and that to-day everything

might have been otherwise and for the better in South Africa if these good old people had not "trekked." Hence the question that heads this article—"Was it a mistake?" I have been reading a good deal about the subject, and I have come in contact here with a good many of the descendants of the first trekkers. I have been more than four months now a prisoner in this unhappy country, and cannot help instituting comparisons and forming conclusions. Let me reason the matter out calmly.

There is no doubt that the grievances of the first emigrants were real. Lord Glenelg and many other politicians of his day blundered stupidly, so stupidly that we can to-day only think of it with amazement. Could men of common sense really have acted like that? Yet so it was. Then, too, the Colonial farmers suffered much from the cruel, marauding Kaffirs and the frequent Kaffir wars. These grievances were real, and there were more, several more, very galling too. I do not dispute the sufficiency or the validity of the *cause*. What I ask myself is, Was the cause intended to have this *effect*? Ought their trials and tribulations to have driven them to this extreme measure—the leaving of their country?

Let me reason again, Where was there ever a country that never was misruled? Had the people

of Holland and England not much to complain of, and that often too? Did not the Dutch, ancestors of many of the old trekkers, suffer much and often under the rule of the East India Company in the Colony? Read the history—what great discontent there often was, how strained relations frequently were! And yet those people did not seek relief in emigration. And more: many of the trekkers were descendants of the Huguenots, who, though oppressed, left their country only when prevented from worshipping their God according to the dictates of their consciences. And how did the Dutch treat them in the Colony—the East India Company people? The use of their language was forbidden them, they were compelled to live only in certain districts, and many more petty annoyances were heaped upon them. And yet *they* trekked not. With patience, through constitutional agitation, all the friction and irritation were removed.

Again, the well-meaning trekkers, the pioneers, did they escape Kaffirs and Kaffir wars by emigrating? How is it possible that they could have expected such a blessing? True, their avowed intention was not to quarrel with the Kaffir, but to buy or barter his land and live peaceably. This they honestly meant to do, I really believe; but did they not yet know the Kaffirs? Did they not know

that he was *jealous* of, and would act *treacherously* to, every white man entering his country? Surely they knew that the Kaffir was convinced that the advent of the white man meant his possessing the land, and that, therefore, at all risks he must be stopped. They knew all this. Why, then, trek to escape Kaffir wars? Verily it was leaping from the frying-pan into the fire. Even more: they knew already that the Zulus of Natal and the men of Moselikatse were ten times more cruel and warlike than any tribe of the Colonial Kaffirs. And yet they trekked to escape trouble with the Kaffirs. Surely something was wrong. It cannot be that their troubles were sent in order to drive them to this. I said that they leaped from the frying-pan into the fire. Alas! so it was: witness the frightful massacres in Natal by Dingaan and his hordes!

Again, they emigrated, as every one said, to find liberty, to rule themselves in their own way, to escape all oppressions. Have they obtained their wish? To answer the question properly, let me first glance at the old Colony. Ever so many more farmers remained behind than those who left the Colony, as we know. They had the very same grievances. They remained, however, overcame *all* their troubles, and are to-day the happiest people imaginable. We (I am one of them) have perfect

political freedom, no Kaffir troubles, and English and Dutch live most peacefully together, loyal to their Queen. Our most distinguished clergymen, lawyers, politicians, doctors, teachers, &c., are pure Africanders, sons of the soil. We have made marvellous strides in every way—educationally, socially, in religion, in politics, everywhere. No one can visit the Colony and become acquainted with the people without noticing how happy, hospitable and contented they are. Remember, now, this condition of affairs has followed on the very same circumstances which caused the old pioneers to emigrate, *forced* them to it, as *they thought.* Here you have *cause* and *one effect* in the case of the Colonial people.

Let us now examine the effect in the case of the trekkers. They began their nomad life with trouble and disaster. Take, for example, Trichardt's expedition and Vechtkop. Then came the frightful chapter of Natal history written in blood. And then, alas! jealousy caused disagreement amongst themselves, and there came divisions. Natal was annexed and a number of them remained there, becoming soon, as they are to-day, prosperous, happy farmers and citizens. A number, however, joined the Free State and Transvaal trekkers, and the history of these people, what does it teach us? Take the Transvaal,

for there most of them settled. No sooner had they made a republic of the country than they began quarrelling amongst themselves. Political strife and religious dissensions rent them in twain. Even civil war ensued. Yea, even with the Free State they quarrelled! It was a most unhappy country. The Church factions were at one another's throats, liberty had degenerated into licence. "No taxes!" was the great cry. Poverty reigned and bankruptcy stared the country in the face, just at the time of the annexation in 1878.

The War of Independence in 1881 reunited them, and especially through religious influence, brought to bear by Colonial clergymen, the two factions in the Dutch Reformed Church were reconciled. Did it last long? No. At the time of the Raid the fire of religious dissensions was again raging fiercely. Verily the people were only united when there was a common foe. Otherwise, internal strife and religious squabbles pervaded the whole country. Just before the Raid Church lawsuits were threatening everywhere. Expensive ones had been entered upon, and fanatical zeal and hatred were rampant. And again, only a common foe united them.

All these vicissitudes, have they favourably influenced Transvaal character? The immediate descendants of the old trekkers are still men of

sterling character and religious convictions, but a restless and nomadic people, no tillers of the soil, by no means industrious, always ready to resent any encroachments on their rights even by their own Government! When Burgers became President some hundreds trekked to Humpata, because they approved not of his religious views. Common sense will tell you what the descendants of such men are like to-day. They are uneducated, for only lately has education begun to be recognised; the poor amongst them are frightfully bigoted; the rich with no ballast to counteract sudden accessions of wealth. Through contact with the irreligious Hollander, young Transvaal in the towns has lost that veneration for religion which characterised their fathers. I know the Colony and its people very well, and make bold to say that this description is quite inapplicable there. Of course, we are not saints there, but sinners too, only there is a mighty difference between sinner and sinner. Again, the political and religious quarrels of the country have tended to form fanatics. From the President downwards every one is but too ready to find a Bible text wherewith either to prophesy future greatness or to justify any action of theirs which is criticised. This peculiarity has been exemplified to an alarming extent during the present war. Newspaper men,

even well-known irreligionists, utter Bible texts and pious sentiments *ad libitum*. But, see you, this goes down with the poor, simple, back-country burgher.

Once more: capacity for hatred has been developed in this country to a pitiful extent. I have never seen or heard the like. What I have heard here, now and often too, has made my blood run cold. Expressions of intensest hatred and cruelty—words the Colonial educated, refined Boer would not dream of uttering. Their history has tended to make the people quarrelsome, spiteful, suspicious, self-righteous, in fact to a great extent even sanguinary. A Christian, civilised people ought not to cultivate such a character, and the Colonial Africander, I trust, is not such a man. Has there, then, not been a mistake? Would it not have been better for these good old men to have waited patiently and laboured industriously, rather than trek about and fight and nurse their hatred, learning to despise every one daring to differ from them. The *Cape Colony* and the *Transvaal*, or *Happiness* and *Discontent*, or *Love* and *Hatred*—good names for the two pictures. Look upon that picture and then on this, and tell me, *Was it a mistake?*

CHAPTER XXV

NO DOUBT ABOUT THE FOLLOWING MISTAKES, HOWEVER !

I HAVE been a prisoner so long now that thoughts and ideas I had about men and matters have had time to fructify. Illusions I had have had time to be dispelled ; suspicions to be confirmed or otherwise. What I will attempt to state now is what I believe to be the solemn truth. I am trying to put into words prevalent ideas here which I have verified as being prevalent. And, as I write, I cannot help saying, oh, the pity of it ! All this need not have been if wiser counsels had prevailed, and false hopes and delusions had not held sway.

In the former chapter I referred to the capacity for hating prevalent here. Let me refer to it again for a moment. Ever since the Great Trek many parents here have considered it their duty to impregnate their children from their very youth with a bitter

hatred against the English and whatever is English. Gradually this hatred extended also to Africanders in the Cape and in neighbouring British colonies. Suspicion against Colonial-bred and educated clergymen was widely disseminated. Indeed the "Hervorende" Church attempted to pass a resolution which would exclude any but Hollander clergymen from their pulpits. Their Politicians warned against the "Engelschgezinde" (English-minded) politicians and ministers of the Cape Colony. As I said, independence to them meant hatred of what is English and suspicion of British subjects. To be true Africander meant in their eyes to be Transvaaler. The moralist will tell us how detrimental to strong, sturdy, noble development of national character such sentiments are. But to proceed. Remembering the above, I can now understand how the more bold among them, since the retrocession of 1881, have begun to dream of a united South Africa. By that they understand a Republic from the Zambezi to Table Mountain, under its own flag. In itself there was no harm in this dream. Then came the discovery of gold and eventual prosperity, and this dream began to assume proportions. Free State politicians had an honest conception of this great idea. They entered into a Customs Union, for instance, with Natal and Cape Colony, and at the

same time lived in close union with the Transvaal. They believed in waiting and not forcing the hand of history, till a Steyn became President. The Transvaal, however, proud because it had gold, discovered and worked for them by Uitlanders and English enterprise especially, blinded through success in their struggle for freedom in 1881, began plotting. Let us have a united South Africa, under our own flag, said they; all the time they meant it to be the Transvaal flag. Stupendous ambition! And now began their policy of propaganda in the Colony, Natal, Free State, and in Europe. Secret service money is freely spent. The Bond leaders are got hold of in the Colony, and every little village is filled with insinuations and ideas which, if allowed to fructify, would mean simple rebellion against the Queen. All the time internal development in the Transvaal was disgracefully neglected, or muddled. Take, for instance, education and State finances; notice the galling monopolies! Then came the unfortunate Raid, lending colour and show of reason to all Transvaal pretensions and claims. Oh, that Raid—it spoiled so much. Well, sins are punished! So England must suffer to-day for what some of her children have wrongly done through mistaken zeal. Since the Raid the Transvaal propaganda were prosecuted with redoubled zeal.

Promises of reform remained unfulfilled, and, as a high official here told me, "we were determined to let it drift to a rupture with England. Then," said he, "our dreams would be realised—a Republic right south to Table Mountain." *Sotto voce*—"under Transvaal flag with Kruger as President." Said I, "But England will conquer you." "No," said my informant; "there are three factors we rely on" (and many other talks I have had during the past four months confirm what this gentleman said); and *these* are the three he mentioned as promising them ultimate success :—

1. "The Cape Colony will rise to help us as soon as we declare war."

When I looked surprised, he said, "The Bond leaders have assured us of it." "What," said I, "Mr. Jan Hofmeyr and Mr. Schreiner?" Then came the unwilling answer, because he saw that I knew something—"No, not *the* leaders, but leaders in the north of the Colony, even members of Parliament, in disaffected districts" (and then he mentioned names, which I will not put in print, for I cannot believe these gentlemen guilty of such traitorous conduct). Aye, so sure was the Transvaal of the Colonial Africanders joining them, that on October 15th, when I was treacherously taken prisoner, the Commandant solemnly assured me,

as I mentioned before, that between 7,000 and 8,000 Colonials had already joined the Transvaal forces. "And soon the rebellion will have spread right to Table Bay. We ourselves have now already," said he, "90,000 men in the field." Thus the Transvaal Government had filled the poor, good burghers with their dreams and delusions. That commander solemnly believed in the Colonial rising. I am glad that *then* even I said to him, "I do not believe it," and that my trust in my countrymen has been justified. Since then several others have said, again and again, the Colony will soon rise—"thousands are coming over every week." Alas for them, the Colony has *not* risen, and now there is bitter disappointment. An official said to me a little while ago, "You see the Colonials, of course, could not openly join; we can understand that they must remain loyal, naturally!" But such was not the talk at the beginning. No, they try to whittle down the fact, but their disappointment and chagrin are immense. The first week of the war the papers stated that Jan Hofmeyr and Schreiner had been arrested on account of Transvaal sympathies and treason. Then the bubble burst, and the truth was heard—these men are both loyally doing their duty! To-day they excuse and explain the failure of their hopes of a Colonial rising, but their hearts are bitter

against Jan Hofmeyr and other Colonial leaders. One said, "We would not have fought had we not been assured of a Colonial rising to help throw off the hateful yoke." Aye, how dared they hope that we would prove to be traitors and rebels in the Colony? But such is the Transvaal Government—thus the poor burghers are deceived. Bubble No. 1 is pricked, and there is wailing and gnashing of teeth.

2. "Europe and the American States will interfere."

Thus ran the story. Up to very lately I heard it again and again: "The United States are going to help us, and have offered already to pay all debts for us. Germany will, after a month or two, interfere. France will not allow England to conquer us. Russia will cause trouble in the east, in India; and then England must withdraw all her forces!" This was firmly believed in. And a dishonest Government had no other ground to go on than club-talk and the gutter-press, of France especially. Thus the real Transvaaler, the burgher, was gulled, buoyed up with expectations which their Government had no positive proof of. During the long term of Transvaal successes every one here was patiently waiting for the European or foreign intervention that was sure to come. Now that the tide of

reverses is setting in, and yet no foreign intervention, uneasy thoughts are rampant. An official said to me a few days ago, "I can't understand it; America and Germany promised intervention" (hear that!) "and now not a word, not a sign—nor anything of the kind from anywhere else. I can't understand it. It seems to me that every country is afraid of this hated England, except the Transvaal!" Poor deluded fool, thought I; what right had you to go to war on the strength of suppositions and expectations?

"Now," said he, "if there is no intervention we can't go on. Our ammunition will run out, and we were sure Germany or France would supply us." And thus another bubble is burst. Poor Transvaal burgher, your shrewd President and his myrmidons have cruelly deceived you, and your beautiful newspapers have ably seconded their nefarious objects! What will the reckoning be? Let me here say what struck me as particularly nefarious in the whole delusion—A man is known by the society he keeps. Behold, then, a friendship between righteous Transvaal and Dreyfus France! Unholy alliance, forsooth! General Joubert's ancestors were driven out of France, because no liberty of conscience was allowed them then. To-day that general and ever so many descendants of

those Huguenot refugees, champions of liberty; mind you, and righteousness, hob-nob with France, buy her cannon, employ *her* gunners, applaud *her* gutter-press, forgetting that St. Bartholomew's night still clings to France like a foul taint, and that the shadow of the Dreyfus story darkens her history to-day. Pity the poor, deluded Transvaal burgher; but then, what about the Government that so wilfully misled him with its sophistries? Aye; a terrible blunder has been committed—a crime!

3. "England will give in as she did in 1881." Up to lately the people here have been as sanguine of this as of any of the above eventualities.[1] "When we take Ladysmith and Kimberley and Mafeking," said they (and the *hour* of these doomed places has been striking every day for the last four months)—"then England will give in." "The peace party will assert itself in England, and Jan Hofmeyr and others in the Colony, as they did before, will intercede, and England will not go on." At first the idea was—England will give in, and give them Natal as far as the Tugela, and the Free State will get Kimberley, and then England will leave them alone, and they would be quite satisfied; this when they saw the great Table Mountain bubble had

[1] This was written before Lord Salisbury's despatch of March 11th.

burst. Now that reverses have begun they build their hopes on the new Parliament in England, and a revulsion of public opinion in their favour. For instance, thus said an official to me, "We know England will beat us in the long run, but we have proved that we are a fighting nation, and now only demand to be left alone. The public and the peace-party in England will compel the Government to withdraw the suzerainty claim, and just leave us alone. That's all we want." This is the idea now. Yet there is a feeling of unrest. The Colony will not join, foreign Powers will not interfere, and perhaps England might not give in! Nothing points that way as yet! What then? So great is the unrest that another official said to me, "Do you think that the Powers will allow England to annex us? I don't think so. I think they will interfere." Thought I, for four months how cocksure they were, and now, with the shadow of disaster upon them, what a different song is sung! I pity honestly the deceived, betrayed burgher, who has been goaded on to fight a shadow, while his deceivers sit snugly at home, ostensibly to hold the reins of the Government!

Truly there is no doubt about it; these were big mistakes—aye, criminal blunders!

CHAPTER XXVI[1]

THE BIGGEST MISTAKE OF ALL

IT is quite possible that the Transvaal's expectations, mentioned in the former chapter, especially Nos. 1 and 2, might have been realised, but their own blundering made it an impossibility. I felt that and said it from the beginning. I am more than ever convinced of it now.

As I pointed out before, the Transvaal was really wanting war. During the days of their triumphs, one said to me, "When our President met your Governor at Bloemfontein, we were ready for war and had decided to have it." Let me say here that I am as positive that neither then, nor up to the last moment, was England desirous of, or ready for, war, nor did she wish to be plunged into it. "England wants to annex your country, to take your farms away, to make servants of your wives

[1] Written February 19, 1900.

and daughters," this was the bogie-man a dishonest Government was making use of to whip up the burghers to a fanatical enthusiasm. But to return. The Transvaal was ready and wished for it, and then did the best thing it could do. It published its Ultimatum which had been lying ready for use ever so long. It was a master stroke. England, of course, could not accept of it; war was therefore inevitable, and yet England was unprepared for it in the Colony and in Natal. What ought the Transvaal to have done now?

1. *To have left the Free State out of it.* It had no quarrel with England, and to drag it in was most selfish conduct on the part of the Transvaal. They knew it meant making a buffer of the Free State. They knew that it would have to suffer most severely when the invasion began. It was cruel, selfish conduct. The Free State President, I think, has committed political suicide by allowing himself to be dragged into this snare.

2. *To have defended its own country against any invasion,* but not to have *invaded* Natal or the Colony. This was a tremendous blunder. Of course the greatest mistake was—wanting to make war at all. The Ultimatum ought never to have been sent, and there never would have been war! I am convinced of this, and have good grounds for my

faith. But having set the ball rolling, the next great mistake was the invading of the Colonies. What was the result? England was naturally unprepared and suffered reverses and severe losses. This of course exasperated public feeling in England and alienated sympathy. Foreign countries, such as Germany, commented severely on the impertinence of sending an Ultimatum and the further blunder of invading the Colonies.

Moreover, by invading the Colonies and looting and destroying property, they alienated all the sympathy obtained even there. This was the case especially in the Cape Colony. It was a blunder taking Aliwal North, Colesberg, and Dortrecht, and Burghersdorp, and commanding the inhabitants to join their forces. It was playing a low trick upon them. These poor men became rebels by doing so, and will have to be punished as such when the Republican forces are forced to retire to their own territories — and then? And just fancy taking little places like Kuruman, and Barkly West, and Herbert! What was there to be gained by it, except empty glory for a little while! I cannot understand such blundering; but, you see, they believed so religiously what I mentioned before —that the Colony would rise, and foreign Powers interfere. And how could they but believe? Did

not their prophet-President tell them so? Had they defended their own country, bravely, desperately, as General Joubert wished them to do, then they could have expected sympathy and foreign intervention even; then, in case of defeat, there would not have been any humiliation. Now what a spectacle! England is unprepared and is taken at a disadvantage and suffers reverses. The burghers, maddened by successes, deem that they can carry everything before them. They rush on into the Colonies. They not only alienate sympathy; but now that the British soldiers have arrived, the story of humiliation begins. Kimberley is relieved. The Free State is invaded. They cannot take Ladysmith, nor "plucky little Mafeking," notwithstanding the vulgar, insulting boasting of their bright specimens of newspapers — I beg pardon, *lies*-, not *news*-papers. They will soon be driven out of the Colonies, and forced to defend their borders. And then? Alas! then, too late, they will understand the full extent of their biggest blunder.

The burgher was goaded on to fight for his country, his farm, whilst the Government all along knew that its idea was a larger one; it was going to drive England out of South Africa, forgetting that there were more Africanders preferring English

rule to Transvaal mis-rule than there were Transvaalers preferring Transvaal rule to English domination. To cloak their designs, it was given out that if war came on it would be one caused by the capitalists. The poor capitalist was made responsible for everything that happened. Well, perhaps he is very guilty, but then he is also responsible for the Transvaal's prosperity. His enterprise saved the country from financial ruin and provides the magnificent salaries of the Transvaal President and Government myrmidons to-day. But any stone will do to throw at a dog, and so the capitalist was made a target of. And thus the biggest blunder was committed. It is the old story over again, "Whom the gods wish to destroy they first dement." Have pride and prosperity demented the Transvaal Government? They have played their cards well on many occasions, but this time pride, I fear, has come before the fall.

A grand opportunity was lost, and the end is near.

But then one can't play ducks and drakes with impunity with truth and honesty; and this leads me to another false step taken by the Government here. Let me speak of it in a following chapter.

CHAPTER XXVII[1]

ANOTHER FALSE STEP!

TO whip up the good honest burgher into fanatical enthusiasm for the war and implacable hatred against the English, the Transvaal Government and its agents all about the country had to resort to every possible means. In doing this they took many a false step—one of the principal was the following. I call it a false step, not only because it was based on falsehood, but also because, when one day the burgher discovers that it was so, a reaction will set in, in a direction the Government does not dream of now.

To proceed, it was assiduously given out that England not only meant to annex the country, but also drive every burgher from his farm, compelling him and his wife to earn their daily bread by their own hands. This was told and readily

[1] Written February 21, 1900.

believed, and had its due effect. The real old Transvaal burgher who knows little of the outside world and whose little knowledge is one-sided, has his peculiar ideas of independence and liberty. He understands by these terms more or less the following: the possession of his farm, no direct taxation, and no equality for the Kaffir or any coloured person. (The latter grievance was one of the greatest influences causing the Great Trek.) Amongst others he was diligently taught that the Englishman makes no distinction between white and black; and that if once England ruled the country, then the conquered Boers and the blacks would be placed on the same level. Imagine the effect of such a doctrine on the Boer mind! "In addition," said the propagandist, "the country will be taxed and burdened most frightfully to indemnify England's war expenses. Therefore, if you wish to retain your farm, if you wish to remain dominant as regards the black man, if you desire to maintain your independence (a mild kind of license) fight the English to the very death." All this was told me before the war began by many a burgher, and reiterated since by many more. The result is that the universal bluster one hears now is—"We will fight to the end," and, as one man said to me, "England will have to pass over our dead bodies

to seize our farms!" Another one, a Government official into the bargain, said to me, "If we lose, then before I give up my property and submit to English rule, I'll shoot my wife and children and then myself. I am not going to be made a slave of, nor allow my wife to be some one else's servant." Can you imagine a man of ordinary intelligence indulging in such rhodomontade! And yet such is the case. Something more, I referred to equality of white and black which the Transvaaler dreads so much. You can have no conception of the annoyance and harshness wherewith a Kaffir or any coloured person here is treated. It pained me continually, when on the western border, to hear the Kaffir speak of the Boer—the cruel, hard ones amongst them. One said, "Kicks and cuffs they give in plenty, kind words never." Another, "The Boer makes me pay as much as £1 17s. 6d. hut tax and work for him at a very low price, whilst he himself pays next to nothing in taxes." After I was taken prisoner I was struck by the disdainful way their own Kaffir servants were spoken to. Many officers here attest to similar experiences. Treating a coloured servant kindly and courteously, they call putting him on the same footing as yourself. Treating him as if he were but a dog, and ought to be thankful that

he is allowed to live at all, is what they call keeping him in proper subjection. I saw myself with indignation and horror how Kaffirs, my fellow-prisoners, some even in irons, were treated. Oh, the brutality of it! it makes my blood boil to think of it. A magistrate said to me, "There is only one way of punishing a Kaffir. I find out how much money he has, and then sentence him—a fine of about all he has on him, and twenty-five lashes!" Tell these people now that to give the Uitlander the franchise is to stop such proceedings and introduce the hated equality, and you can imagine how he will object to such a step. Tell him that to allow England to conquer means not only that, but in addition the loss of his beloved farm and his reduction to a state of personal servitude, and you can imagine with what dervish fanaticism he hates, and fights.

As I write this, the tide of war seems to have turned. What will happen now? When defeated the burgher will find that England proclaims amnesty to every one who lays down his arms and goes back to his farm within a certain time. He will be told that no one ever intended to drive him off his farm, or equalise him and the Kaffir, or in any way deprive him of liberty. And then he will round on his misinformers, who primed him

with such stories, and I would not like to stand in the shoes of the Government minion they get hold of on that day—no, by no means! But what a pity all this is! Ah! I cannot help feeling sorry for the real Transvaaler, the burgher. I respect and like him. But who can respect a Government that rules thus and uses such officials?

I am sorry for this deluded country. There will be a rude awakening when one day the burghers find out that they have been misled. Verily, this move of the Government was a false one—stupidly false! It will never recover from this false step so ingloriously taken.

CHAPTER XXVIII

MAJUBA DAY—1900

MAJUBA *then* and *now*—what a contrast! The Transvaal victory of February 27, 1881, was a well-deserved one, was something to be proud of. The burghers fought bravely, and deserved the independence they obtained thereafter.

What a contrast to it the Majuba Day of 1900 forms! Why? some one asks. No one can answer that question in one sentence, nor with any amount of sentences. There are things we do not know. But there are many sidelights which give us an insight into matters and help us form opinions. Let me devote some pages to an investigation thereof.

Of the first Majuba Day Commandant Ferreira wrote: "*We* have not defeated the English, but *God* the Lord. It was impossible for man to do it. And then, too, to lose only *one* man. Indeed, no

glory for man here. To our *Great General* be the glory!" The real, good Transvaaler, the Boer on his farm, has retained that feeling since 1881. He always speaks with subdued voice of that day. *Majuba* had become to him a name sacred and almost awful.

Not so, however, the Government and Government people and the toady Hollander element. To these the word had become a tool wherewith to insult the Englishman and taunt him; wherewith to persuade the poor burgher that the Transvaal had obtained a monopoly of God's care and help, and was now *invincible*. From a Government that protests so much one has a right to expect common honesty, if not towards the enemy, then towards the State's own burghers. And what has the degrading spectacle of the last few weeks been? Let me tell you in a word: A Government and its two newspapers withholding from the people all news of the reverses—Kimberley's relief, Cronjé's danger, Buller's advance—and publishing the falsest statements of marvellous Boer victories. And then, on top of all this, they keep Majuba Day and the Sunday before as days of thanksgiving and prayer!

Let me go into details. Kimberley has now been relieved for several days, and Jacobsdal taken, and numbers of their wagons burned and ammuni-

tion cases exploded. What is told to the public? Their papers, and their Government officials here, who see us, answer us that they only allowed 2,000 cavalry to ride into Kimberley, that they might take so many more prisoners when Kimberley falls. And *not yet*[1] have the papers told the story of Kimberley's relief, and Cronjé's flight and capture. In a leading article casual reference is occasionally made to Kimberley's possible relief, but no more.

Some three weeks ago a Government official, for the second time since New Year, solemnly assured me that Ladysmith *had* surrendered, and that the President was debating what to do with Sir George White. And on the Majuba Day of 1900 Ladysmith was practically being relieved, whilst they were thanking God in their churches for their glorious victories, whilst the *Diggers' News* of February 28th was publishing in big headlines that Buller had *gone back* over the Tugela, *lock, stock, and barrel.* Fancy telling a lie as tall as this on the very day of Ladysmith's relief.

The *Volksstem* told us on February 28th that since the Sunday prayers had been offered up for Cronjé's deliverance. The same paper says: "The situation in the Free State is grave but hopeful." It also says: "Cronjé is entirely surrounded, but is too good a

[1] Written February 28, 1900.

General to be taken—he'll escape." All this, when it *was known* that on Majuba Day, February 27th, Cronjé had surrendered unconditionally, even whilst the President in Pretoria was preaching in his church before a large congregation.

Some four days ago the *Diggers' News* had a startling little tit-bit :—

"900 BRITISH CAVALRY CORNERED."

"CRONJÉ THE CAPTOR."

Unfortunately the little game did not come off. Cronjé is now captured, and the cavalry have cornered him. But does the pious *Digger* rectify his little . . . er . . . error of judgment? Does it tell its readers of the reversal of the programme? No—oh! no; it writes pious articles on Majuba Day, and tells lies. On this day, the *28th of February*, it has a leading article telling of Buller's *fourth failure* to relieve Ladysmith, when even *we* prisoners *knew* that Ladysmith was being relieved. The Government and the papers have been fulsome in their protestations of belief in the justice of their cause, and in a God of Justice! Does a just cause need such bolstering up? Will a God of Justice wink at such immorality? Is it wonder that Majuba, 1900, effaces Majuba, 1881, so completely?

A Government official said to me, after the battles

at Magersfontein and Colenso, "I believe that we are *invincible;* I must believe it now. God will not allow us to be conquered. The British soldiers will no longer fight. They are fired into by their own cannon to make them charge." The *same* man, not knowing *what* we know, nor *how* we know, about Kimberley, and Cronjé, and Ladysmith, &c., tells me the most *awful lies* about the position, just as the papers do. And on Majuba Day he was in church, and thanked God, with President and congregation, that he was not as the British, but a better man. A better man for perverting the truth he is any day, I make no doubt.

A friend of mine, whom I know to be a Christian, but primed by these "official" stories, once visited me. He told me how the English soldiers were shot down, whilst scarcely a burgher fell; how the "Tommies" refused to advance, but were fired into by regiments behind them. And then, he said, "If a man now still refuses to believe that God is fighting for the Transvaal, he must be mad!" And now? The Boers are clearing out of their positions round Ladysmith, leaving their wagons behind them. One of their generals wires, "It is no use, the burghers will no longer face the English regiments." And all along their vainglorious boast has been "No human power can beat us out of our positions round

Colenso and Ladysmith." And now that they are clearing out with more haste than dignity, what must the silent observer think of it—of their invincibility and monopoly of Providential help? What? Has God now ceased to fight for them? Aye, you can't mock Him!

Pride goes before the fall—chickens have an awkward way of coming home to roost, as the extracts from their newspapers I give further on will, amongst others, show. The mills of God grind slow, but exceeding fine! This is verily no longer the Government of 1881! It was a brave people then and an unsophisticated Government. To-day 'tis a brave, good people *misled* by a hypocritical government and a couple of disgraceful newspapers. When I notice the loathing and the scorn with which the British officers and gentlemen have treated these scurrilous productions, my heart feels sore for the poor Transvaaler—not the Hollander or German importations, who vitiate the political atmosphere and dictate to the real owner of the country—but the original white inhabitants and their descendants. It could have been otherwise, so vastly different and better if their own statesmen and Colonial friends had given them better and sounder advice.

On the first Majuba Day they really fought for independence; not for liberty, for where is there

more liberty than under the English flag? They obtained their independence, but alas! made a wrong use of it. The Uitlander discovered their gold for them, and developed it, and made them rich. And then they reward him by taking away *his* independence, making him the bread-winner for the State *without* burgher rights.

Honest friends warn the Transvaal of the danger it is courting. These friends are hated and cast off. On the Transvaal goes in its mad career of overweening presumption. The battle-cry is changed. 'Tis no longer *independence*, 'tis now "Away with England"—England out of South Africa, as I pointed out in another chapter. And England has been their best friend. But move England *out*, and then who *in*? France, or Germany, or Russia? And what an improvement that will be on English suzerainty!! Oh, the stupidity, and the folly of it! Is it wonder that Majuba of 1900 is such a contrast to Majuba of 1881? Is this retribution? I am not their judge. I am one of the friends whom they discarded—but friend still of the *people*, not the *official*. I cannot be the latter unless I love prevarication and falsehood!

CHAPTER XXIX

AND AFTER

I HAVE in the former chapter referred to what happened on Majuba Day—Cronjé surrendered with over 4,000 men, and the Boers evacuated their positions round Ladysmith, starting in full retreat. Ladysmith was thus practically relieved on that day, Tuesday, the 27th, whilst our forces really entered the town on Wednesday. *All this was known to the Government and many others; even we prisoners knew it.* But it was kept from the people by telling the most cowardly falsehoods. In the very churches, where the President and other officials were present, they prayed, *knowing the above,* that Cronjé might be rescued.

With these data given me, I ask how must I understand and interpret the following?

This is what the *Diggers' News* of Wednesday,

February 28th, published, knowing that it was a lie :—

"ANOTHER BOER VICTORY.
Prince Alfred's Guards
Engaged and routed.
200 Killed and Wounded."

Also this, ten times worse :—

"THE BATTLE OF PIETERS.
BULLER'S FOURTH ATTEMPT
and how it failed.
GLORIOUS BOER VICTORY.
Two Regiments Cut Up.
FORLORN HOPE FAILS.
British Positions surrounded.
Guns taken over River again."

Is this blasphemy, or am I mistaken? But there is worse. On their sacred Majuba Day, the 27th, a wire—inspired, of course—is sent to this beautiful paper, *from Pretoria*, as follows :—

"Pretoria, 27th (special). General Botha wires from Tugela to-day that the British forces are retreating south of the river lock, stock and barrel, and that all their movements since Sunday are inexplicable."

Worse still, on that very day, February 28th, the truth-loving *Diggers' News* has the following leading article. One could laugh over it were it not so

ghastly horrible in its deceit and brag. It is a very "Liar's Programme," a very "Fool's Talk," a "Braggart's Boasting," whilst professing to be the mouthpiece of a *praying Government.* Read and digest :—

"BACK TO THEIR BASE.

"The true dimensions of the fourth attempt on the part of General Buller's forces to break a way through to Ladysmith are this morning established by our correspondents. At first it seemed that the affair at Pieters—a point midway between Colenso and Ladysmith—was only in the nature of a skirmish, but later reports point to a sharp and severe struggle and a determined effort to obtain certain of the Federal positions on this side of the river, and so facilitate the relief of the beleaguered city. The chances in favour of the enemy were greater than at any previous time and upon any previous occasion. Since the last endeavour they had crossed the Tugela and obtained a certain footing on this side of the river, so that their position was naturally strengthened and it seemed as though the onset this time must prove irresistible and that even the hardy warriors of the veld must give way before it. To make it still more effective the finest fighting material was selected from the Irish regiments at General Buller's command, and on the 23rd they marched out upon the Boer positions. The sequel is told by our war correspondents in words which make perhaps the most lurid canvas of the campaign. Of regiments that stepped out in all their strength, full of life, hope, and courage, but a handful remain, while a battlefield strewn with dead and dying is there to bear witness to the manner of the repulse, to the deadly effect of the Mauser fire, to the presence and prevalence in the Boer lines of the heroic determination to stand to the last and block the way to Ladysmith even against the mightiest legions of the most potent Empire.

"All this was four days ago, and since then the British have been burying their dead, caring for their wounded, and recovering, as far as recovery is possible, from a blow which is obviously the weightiest they have suffered since the war began—a blow, too, which was no doubt unexpected, for only a few days previously the Federal lines had seemingly faltered, and in the other camp they believed, no doubt, that, because there had been wavering tactics in the Federal front, only a half-hearted resistance would be encountered along the rest of the high road to Ladysmith. If that was so, the enemy is again convicted of ignorance of the Boer, and of mistaking his recuperative powers. In any case, whether the fourth attempt was the outcome of cocksureness or not, or whether it was a strategical blunder from first to last—a few hundreds of men seem to have been hurled at an impregnable position without adequate backing or support—a severe chastisement has been administered, and the severity of it is now proved by the fact that the British positions on this side of the river have been forsaken, their guns removed, and a return made *en masse* to their original base at Chievely. It means that this was the forlorn hope, and that the forlorn hope has failed; and, confronted as it was by a foe whose patriotic fervour was present in every shot they fired and whose mind was up, in the name of Land and People, that nothing would move them from their rock-like positions, no other experience for the enemy was possible. It was a case of "over our dead bodies first," and against that the most splendid courage and the most reckless daring could avail nothing—there was nothing for it but to reel back defeated and dismayed and find death in a crimson field that announces yet another Amajuba, pricks out the Boer destiny always more definitely upon a clearer and brighter firmament, and signalises the abandonment of Ladysmith and its early fall, to which, it is obvious, everything now points.

"Four times the impossible has been attempted, not without pluck and persistence, and attempted, too, in a difficult country where Nature is strong against the invader; but even for the pluckiest and most persistent there are impossibilities, and the

relief of Ladysmith is now proved amongst the number. General Buller, it should be said, has done his best, and our correspondents testify to the courage of his men; but the Boer, his Mauser, and the mountains are in between Colenso and the beleaguered city, and the Boer, his Mauser, and the mountains are found to be an invincible combination. It is again a case of the small nation fighting for its faith and very existence, and succeeding."

But there is more. The above was published and read in the Transvaal *on the very day* whereon the British troops victoriously entered Ladysmith, and began pursuing the Boer forces. And yet the *Volksstem* of *Thursday*, March 1st, publishes the following leading article. These two leading articles are brother and sister, with regard to their bold mendacity, and yet they so stupidly contradict one another :—

"THE SITUATION.

"It is not surprising that the events of the past few days should have awakened a considerable amount of anxiety, especially when they are taken in connection with the rumours which have reached the capital during the past few days.

"It was known that the Federal forces, which had for some three months past so successfully resisted the attacks of General Buller at the Tugela, which have been so repeatedly made, and the forces concentrated around the besieged town of Ladysmith, had been greatly reduced, in order to provide reinforcements for the burghers in the Free State. It was also known that the British forces had been constantly

increasing in strength, so that at the present time a force of not much less than 50,000 troops, with some 125 cannon, were under the control of General Buller.

"Our burghers are worthy of the greatest admiration for the fact that in the face of such overwhelming odds and such difficult circumstances, they should so manfully have maintained their positions.

"It is a difficult matter to judge of the eventual result of the operations which are being carried on in Natal. It is possible that General Buller may have seen reason to believe that his anticipated relief of Ladysmith is within the range of possibility, and that as a consequence it may be found necessary that our forces should be employed in defending the borders of our own territory.

"At any rate the blood of the Transvaalers, and the Free Staters, which has flowed so freely, not only at the Tugela, and at Ladysmith, and the brilliant courage which has been there displayed in the terrible conflict, in which both have taken such an important part, and the sacrifices which have been made by the citizens of both Republics, cannot fail to produce lasting fruit, for the present generation, and still more for our posterity.

"Whatever may be the result of recent operations both on the Tugela and on the Modder River—official details as to which are yet wanting—one thing is certain, that the Republics have but one duty, and that the people will not fail therein, we are firmly persuaded. We are fighting not for gold, nor for glory, but for our hearths and homes—and for our sacred and undoubted rights as a nation. The issue is clear.

"*The latest reports from the Natal front give no reason to suppose that Ladysmith has been relieved.* On the contrary, our burghers are yet fighting bravely to the south of that town. Should such event, however, unfortunately happen, the war will only have assumed a new phase. We shall then have to fight a purely defensive fight at the barrier gates of the Republic."

On the *very same day* the following telegram from the President to his people is published, a telegram written *after* the President *knew* of the double event of Majuba Day, a telegram bristling with Bible texts, a telegram full of passionate appeal to the God of hosts, who, however, as they seemingly forget, is also the God of Truth who hates a lie, as well as the *suppressio veri*. But any argument, and any attitude of hypocrisy serves these officials evidently, fighting for *liberty*, whilst it *oppresses* others, who dare differ from them in opinion.

I say candidly that when I read the following wire a cold shudder of horror crept over me. Was it blasphemy, or am I mistaken? Are the Transvaalers God's chosen people more than the English or any other Christian people? They God's chosen people, when the same President, Paul Kruger, fought against his own people in their civil war, animated by religious hatred and political jealousy. Oh, the horror of it all! I can only say this: I know *God is not mocked with impunity*. Majuba of 1900 is proof enough thereof.

Read the following now attentively:—

"THE PRESIDENT'S TELEGRAM.

"The following telegram has been addressed by the State President to all officers and burghers of the Republic:—

"SIRS AND BROTHERS,—

"So soon as you cease to stand fast and to strive in the name of the Lord, then has unbelief appeared, and then follows cowardice, and when you turn your backs on the foe, there is no hope of further protection, for then have we ceased to trust in the Lord.

No, no, brethren, let it not be so. Has not the Almighty already given us a double proof that He is on our side? Where our burghers have stood fast, no matter how severe the struggle has been, the Lord has driven back our enemies by a small number of our forces. Brethren, is it not the same God who cleft the Red Sea asunder, and punished Pharaoh with all his hosts when Moses remained firmly trustful? Is it not the same God who enabled thousands to drink of the stream which He brought forth from the rock? Is is not the same God who walked upon the sea, and stilled the storm and the tempest, and to whom the winds were obedient? Is it not the same God who called Peter to Him upon the waves of the sea, and who supported him as he walked thereon, and when his faith wavered, grasped him by the hand, while He rebuked him for his want of faith? Is it not the same God who has promised to us through the Christ, born of the tribe of Judah, and who encourages all who trust in Him, with the words, 'Ye who believe in God, believe also in Me, I will not leave you nor forsake you. Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world, for I have overcome the world'? It appears to me from a study of God's Word, that we live at a time which is spoken of in the Revelation, where the Beast has received the power to persecute the Church of Christ, and to try her as gold is purified when placed in the furnace. The enemy has not the securing of victory in his own hand, but the victory is with the Lord. Up to the present time the Lord has shown that He is on our side, having given us so many victories in times when we have remained steadfast in the faith. No, no, brethren, let us not fall into unbelief, by forsaking Him, but stand fast in the faith to the death. The Lord says that they who fight in faith, and who fall by the sword, are dear in His

sight, and that their death is a sacrifice upon His altar. This is the strife by means of which we may hope to win the crown, both in a material and a spiritual sense. Read Psalm xxvii. verse 7. God there says: 'Be of good courage, ye Godfearing host, for the Lord is faithful. In your weakness He will make perfect His strength.' Read Psalm xxxiii., from the seventh verse to the end, where it says that the victory is in the hand of the Lord, and not with the multitude of horses or carriages. Read Psalm cviii., and especially the last two verses, which tell us that they who strive in the name of the Lord, shall perform mighty deeds, and shall destroy the enemy. Read Psalm cxviii.: 'They had surrounded me like bees, but in the name of the Lord I slew them, and they were as thorns in the fire.' Read also the tenth verse of the same Psalm. Nay, brethren, let us not bring our whole progeny into destruction, but stand fast in the faith, and continue to fight, and we shall be convinced that the Lord will stand up in His might and scatter His enemies. Read also Psalm lxviii. The faith of the burghers is at its extreme point, and the test is most severe, but the Lord will shortly show that He alone lives and reigns. The young men rather chose death in the fiery furnace than forsake their faith. Our forefathers chose rather to suffer at the stake than to give up their faith, and the Church still enjoys Divine protection, and those who choose death rather than deny their faith are as a sacrifice upon the altar.

"Read this telegram to all the officers and burghers, and my belief and prayer is that the Lord will strengthen all our burghers in the faith, even though they have no earthly rock behind which to seek protection, but on the open plains must fight for victory. At Modder River our burghers fought against thousands, who completely surrounded them, on an almost open plain, but they drove back the foe, and destroyed them by hundreds."

On Friday, March 2nd, the *Volksstem* had the following acknowledgment of what happened on

the previous Tuesday, Majuba Day. It makes most curious and instructive reading, when compared to the deliberate mis-statements of the previous Thursday and Wednesday.

I give the reader first *their* account of what happened, and then the leading article, of which note the concluding paragraph especially.

To me it is inexplicable that, when on one of their sacred days such a double and terrible catastrophe takes place, its officials should still allow such utterly mendacious reports about it. The reader knows exactly what happened, and a summary of the news we received day by day, given later on, will give him an idea of the utter horror of the position here. From my heart, I say again, I pity the good, real Transvaaler, thus sacrificed on the altar of mendacity by a hypocritical, tyrannical Government.

This is their account :—

"THE WAR.

"REPORTED SURRENDER OF GENERAL CRONJÉ.

"(*Official.*)

"PRETORIA, *Friday, March 2nd*, 12 noon.

"Nothing has been heard from General Cronjé since the 26th inst., and the Government has reason to believe that he, together with between two and three thousand men, had surrendered on the 27th of February to the British. An

official report to this effect was published by the British Consul in Delagoa Bay on Wednesday last, but in that report no particulars were given. On the afternoon of the same day a report was received from General De Wet, to the effect that General Cronjé was still cut off, and that there was a report to the effect that he had surrendered, but no confirmation of that report had been received. As soon as such confirmation was received, General De Wet stated that he would wire. The heliographist signalled on the same afternoon that communication with General Cronjé had been interrupted since the day before. It is probable that the heliograph had been broken, as on the spot where it stood a very heavy cannonade had been proceeding. Chief Commandant De Wet wired the same evening (Wednesday) that Kaffirs who had come from the lager of General Cronjé had circulated a report that the General had surrendered. Commandant De Wet says that he cannot possibly believe the report, but should it prove to be true it should not discourage us, for the greatest wonders which God has wrought, both in the present struggle and on former occasions, have been accomplished by small numbers. Yesterday a report was received from the despatch riders from Petrusburg that a certain Barend Venter and his son Roelof, from the district of Bloemfontein, had arrived, and brought tidings that General Cronjé and his force had surrendered to the British on Tuesday morning. Venter and his son had hidden in holes, and after two days of hardship, had succeeded in reaching the camp of the Boers. Last night late the following message was received from Commandant De Wet: 'In connection with the reported surrender of General Cronjé, I have to-day seen other burghers who escaped at the time of the surrender, and who confirm the report of Venter. We must stand fast under this trial, and hope that God will by this means strengthen our officers and our burghers, so that they may discharge their duty to Him, to the Government, and to the people of the country.'

"In connection with these events various changes in our positions in Natal and at Colesberg having been found neces-

sary. The full particulars of these changes are not yet known. From reports which have been received there is no reason for anxiety, as the burghers are determined to spare no effort in order to drive the enemy from our borders.

"(Spec.) BLOEMFONTEIN, *March 1st.*

"The following official statement has just been given out at the War Office—

"Acting Chief Commandant De Wet wires from Petrusburg, under date of yesterday, that there are rumours in circulation from Kaffirs who arrived at Petrusburg from General Cronjé's lager, that the General has surrendered to the enemy. General De Wet adds that he cannot yet credit this report."

"(Spec.) BLOEMFONTEIN, *March 1st.*

"The report of General Cronjé's surrender, which reached here this morning, has now been officially confirmed."

"(Spec.) BLOEMFONTEIN, *March 2nd.*

"It is now officially stated that, owing to a lack of ammunition and food, General Cronjé was compelled to capitulate with the enemy last Tuesday morning.

"He is thought to have had about 2,500 men with him, many of his burghers having escaped through the English lines and joined other commandos while he was surrounded.

"One of those who escaped states that General Cronjé's losses during the recent fighting was about 25 killed and 50 wounded.

"General De Wet is prepared to check any advance of the enemy towards Bloemfontein."

"THE RETIREMENT FROM LADYSMITH.

"(Spec.) GLENCOE, *Friday morning, March 2nd.*

"The falling back to the Biggarsberg is being systematically carried out and in an orderly manner. Several of the commandos are charged with the duty of holding back the enemy, and they were fighting heavily yesterday.

"Our forces were too few in number to hold out for so long a time against the overwhelming might of the British. Our lines were too scattered to permit of a successful resistance with so small a force.

"Though the being compelled to relinquish the siege of Ladysmith is very trying to our men, it has in no way destroyed their confidence or their courage, and they are quite convinced that they will succeed in keeping the enemy on the other side of our borders. At the same time they will be able to inflict considerable injury upon the enemy.

"The splendid manner in which some of our commandos have withstood repeated attacks, is worthy of the greatest praise. They have had to contend with extraordinarily great difficulties, and have done so in a most exemplary manner. This is in addition to the terrible attacks which have been carried on by the British, who have simply poisoned our positions with lyddite.

"President Kruger arrived here yesterday, and his personal influence has had a wonderful effect upon the burghers, who do not regard the future at all darkly.

"Now the real war will begin, that is to say, the defence of the Republican territory, against the unjust attacks of our foes. Now the Englishmen will learn for the first time what Boer warfare is really like.

"I am again able to say that in spite of the unfortunate fact that we are compelled to relinquish our positions around Ladysmith the future is by no means such as to be unfavourable to our cause."

And now follows the leading article :—

"'THE VOLKSSTEM,' *Friday, March 2nd.*

"From the list which we published yesterday respecting the numbers of British soldiers in South Africa, on the 20th of January last, our readers will have gathered that there cannot be far short of two hundred thousand British troops in South Africa at the present moment. Since the 20th of January last,

several transports have arrived, and others are still to arrive, containing additions to this already enormous force. These men are no sooner landed than they are drafted to the front by the various routes which are still open to them. It has thus happened that, in every instance, the British troops which at the beginning of the year were greater in number than the Republican forces, have been again considerably increased. This has led on the one hand to the relief of Kimberley, and on the other hand to the possibility of Ladysmith also being relieved. As we explained yesterday, the invasion of the Free State, and the march of British forces in the direction of Bloemfontein, has necessitated the withdrawal of a considerable number of our forces from the Natal territory, in order that a serious resistance might be offered to the advance of the enemy in the Free State. Although the Republican forces have still been able to hold their own, and to inflict serious loss upon the enemy at the Tugela, it is evident that with a considerably diminished force, pitted against an ever increasing might, it would be impossible to prolong the struggle at that point, beyond a certain limit. Now that Republican territory is actually invaded by the British, of course the first necessity is to take measures to relieve that territory of the presence of the English. The duty of the burghers has now been narrowed down to the adoption of defensive tactics, so as to prevent the enemy from obtaining a permanent footing on Republican ground, and to the accomplishment of this object every available force will be directed. In this struggle for the holding inviolate of their own territory, the burghers will not be found lacking in an even greater courage than has in the past so greatly distinguished their conduct of the present campaign. There does not appear to be any truth in the report which has been circulated to the effect that Ladysmith has been relieved, and so far as we can ascertain, in the absence of official news, the Federal forces are still fighting most stubbornly to the south of Ladysmith. Should, however, Ladysmith be relieved within a short time, it will then become the duty of our burghers to defend the border

line of the country, which abuts upon the Colony of Natal, and which presents a more perfect defensive position than is to be found to the south of Ladysmith. It is at this point where the burghers have in the past so greatly distinguished themselves in connection with the War of Independence, and there can be no doubt that in assuming the offensive at this point, the British will be faced by a most formidable task. Should Bloemfontein fall into the hands of the enemy, which in the highest official circles is considered very unlikely, that will by no means bring an end to the war. The Boer is not fighting for gold or glory, nor is he fighting for an extension of territory, but in defence of those rights which have been guaranteed to him, time and again, by the very nation which now seeks to establish the right of interference in matters which are just as sacredly the right of the Boer, as is the Government of the City of London the right of the Britisher. When therefore the English assume the offensive, and attempt to wrest from the Republican forces their birthright, it will be found that the war has just begun, and the opposition which may be expected to be offered, may prove to be very much more stubborn than that which has at any time in the past characterised the Federal forces. That being the case, the whole country will then become the theatre of action, and every farmhouse will become a centre of disaffection, from which aid will be supplied to the men who are fighting for their hearths and homes. The subjugation of the Republican capitals will by no means imply the subjugation of the Boer race, and the real difficulties of the situation will then commence, for in scattered bands the Boers will be capable of inflicting untold injury upon the British forces. We yesterday went so far as to say that the possibility of a settlement would be made more likely by the events of the past few days. This would result from the recognition by England of the fact that the Boer desires nothing more than to be left in peaceful possession of his own. The British, at the present time, have but little reason to hope for a continuance of the struggle. They have other and more important matters to

engage their attention, and are probably more desirous of a cessation of hostilities than the Boers themselves, provided that they can secure an honourable settlement. Let them therefore justify their statement that they have no desire to acquire the territory of the Republics, by agreeing, under certain well-defined conditions, to preserve to the Boers that liberty which they themselves profess to prize so greatly."

The reader will note in the above extract the headline—

"THE RETIREMENT FROM LADYSMITH.

"(Spec.) GLENCOE, *Friday, March 2nd.*"

Please turn now to the following extract from the leading article, *in the very same paper:*—

"There does not appear to be any truth in the report which has been circulated to the effect that Ladysmith *has been relieved*, and so far as we can ascertain, in the absence of official news" (this is distinctly beautiful when the official news appears in another column) "the Federal forces are still fighting most stubbornly to the south of Ladysmith, &c."

Woe to the country that tolerates such a mendacious rag, and that tolerates such an editor! But alas! it is the old story. The editor is not a real, good burgher. He is a Hollander importation—an adventurer who has in time of war to prove his patriotism by his mendacity, since in time of peace he failed to establish an enviable reputation.

CHAPTER XXX

A LAST CHANCE

THE reader will remember the chapters on the "Mistakes"—which I tried to point out. These chapters were written *before* Majuba Day—this one *after*. Taking the *before* and *after* together, I can't help feeling that there is a last chance still for the Transvaal. What has happened since I was taken prisoner, and the revelations of this last Majuba week prove to my mind most incontestably that under the present Government the Transvaal never will be a free, independent country, even if no war had taken place; but also that it is doomed now that the war is there. They cannot prevail in the end. The revelations of the former chapter are enough to convince the sober thinking mind that the country has no right to expect the Almighty to work a miracle to save it. And yet I believe a chance has come now still to save something

valuable out of the sinking vessel, and gain that independence which is real, and which will make this a happy and prosperous country—a *last* chance! I give my opinion for what it is worth.

The President has gone to the Natal front, we hear, to try and restore confidence in the burghers, who have lost many, many valuable lives. What for? They say for their liberty. In other words, if England annexes their country, they lose their liberty. They will lose their *independence*, but not their *liberty*, we maintain. But I will not discuss the point. I take them at their own word. They want liberty and independence, and now their last chance has come. The President has a chance now to show and prove that he is the statesman he wishes to be believed, that he is a real *lover* of *country*. *He can stop bloodshed now!* If he does not, he is no statesman and no patriot. He knows what the inevitable result will be if the war continues—the loss of his country *plus* the loss of many hundreds of lives. Does a statesman and a patriot desire that for his country? No! Supposing they were fighting against Russia, which threatened to send them all to Siberia, or against the France of the time of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, threatening to deprive them of religious liberty—then, I would say, fight on, brave hearts! But now when they fight,

and are incited to fight to the bitter end, only against a people *whom they hate*, but who, if victorious, will give them real liberty, I say again, *he* is the true patriot and statesman who uses this last chance to stop further bloodshed. How?

Let the President at once withdraw all his troops to his own borders. Let him tell England that he will agree to the proposals of Sir Alfred Milner at Bloemfontein, and will abide by the Convention of 1884, on condition that England now stops the war. Naturally the English Government will say, "Good, but in addition you must *disarm* also." The good statesman will give in to that just claim too. If Kruger proposes this now, he will find sympathy and support everywhere—in America, Europe, and South Africa. I do not say that the English Government will agree, though I think it might and ought. For if it does, its aim is achieved. This country will have equal rights for Boer and Uitlander, and will forge ahead, and a misrule like the present will be an impossibility—and this will be the next best thing to making it a British colony—which course is beset with many, many difficulties.

When once England has invaded the Transvaal, I doubt if then any one can in fairness expect her to desist before total conquest has been achieved. Now is the *last* chance.

When one, after brave resistance, is beaten, it is no disgrace to acknowledge it. When you know that the inevitable result of your undertaking is failure, it is no disgrace to give up that undertaking.

This is Paul Kruger's chance—will he rise to the occasion—is he great enough for it?

I say again, if ceasing to fight meant slavery and oppression, then by all means go on fighting. But if fighting means only giving vent to hatred and spite against those who are *not* your enemies, then fighting is a crime.

If the President does not rise to the occasion, if in the end the Transvaal is extinguished, after hundreds have been killed, he will have only himself to thank for it—himself and his Government. And when one day they understand it and see it clearly, the self-accusation will be terrible. Thus, when too late, they will curse their obstinacy and folly.

I am not much of a politician, but sitting here in my prison, *hearing*, *seeing*, and *reading* many things, one can use his common sense, and put two and two together. I feel it intensely, and were I free to-day, I would cry it out aloud from the house-tops —"Your last chance has come; for your own and your children's sake, take it!"

The reader will notice that in the *Volksstem's*

leading article, quoted in the last chapter, the writer suggests a cessation of hostilities, a peace, too ; but he wants England to take the initiative. Of course, after Majuba Day of 1900, this is nonsense. I believe, however, that in his heart the writer meant it to be done as I have suggested. Only he *dare not say so.* So much for the *liberty* there is in this country under this *régime.* Fancy for a moment any one writing here against the Government as a Stead, or Leonard Courtney, or a *Reynolds's Newspaper* does in England ! I would not give a penny for that poor wretch's liberty or life. And yet, O Liberty, all this is done in thy name !

I repeat, there is no *public* opinion allowed in this country, only *Government* opinion.

Surely the last Majuba Day must have opened the eyes of many ! I feel more than ever that *the time* has not yet come for *independent development* here. The country has been weighed and found wanting. Kruger had his chance—nineteen years were given him—and he failed. The Cape Colony under British rule has forged ahead a hundred times more quickly and prosperously than this poor country. If the people here do not wish to be British subjects, let them seize their last opportunity of becoming what is next best—independent under British suzerainty, with equal rights to all who desire

to be subjects of its Government. This is the last chance, I believe. Will it be taken? Will Paul Kruger and his advisers rise to the occasion? Or will they allow their selfish aims to predominate, allowing the burghers to be killed, and finally to be subjected against their will? I hope not. Government officials (we meet several here) are already beginning to climb down in their war-talk and to desire peace. The man who now rises to the occasion, who preaches this gospel, who succeeds in obtaining this independence for his country—that man will be his country's saviour—her *grand* man, whether old or young.

Will Paul Kruger be the man? 'Tis his last chance! To-day's news has just come in (March 3). Of course the papers here will not publish it for the first four or five days; but the President knows. He knows that every Boer has now evacuated and has been driven out of the Cape Colony; he knows they are coming trooping in from the Stormberg and Colesberg. He knows that at least 4,000 men were taken with Cronjé, and that there was fearful slaughter that week. He knows how the Krugersdorp commando was cut up in Natal. "*Cui bono*," he will cry to-day, "our forward movement and our audacity!" Will this Government awake from its dream now? By their selfishness they have

brought danger and disaster on their sympathisers in Aliwal North, Burghersdorp, and Colesberg. They have forced these men to become traitors to their Queen. They have imperilled the independence of the Free State—they are now cutting their own throats. Will they awake ere it is too late? Were I free to-day, I would give them a mighty shake and cry, "Give in; 'tis your last chance!"

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CHAPTER XXXI

ANOTHER ESCAPE

IN addition to all the bad news of Majuba Day, the poor Government officials had another bitter pill to swallow. On Tuesday morning early, about six o'clock, when our gaoler came round to count us, he was horrified to find that three officers had escaped—Captain Haldane, and Lieutenants le Mesurier and Brockie.

How shall I describe the scene of wild excitement and confusion that ensued! Of course we were all as sober as judges, and . . . well . . . we knew nothing about it. But let me tell the tale.

I had just got up that morning and had begun dressing, when our gaoler came to my little corner. I saw at once, from his appearance, that something was wrong. I thought at first that he was ill. He looked so ill, was deathly pale, whilst beads of perspiration stood on his forehead, though the

early morning was very cold. "What is the matter?" I asked. In solemn voice he answered, "Three more fellows have escaped." "What," said I, in apparent astonishment, "three more officers gone away, without your leave?" "Yes," came the lugubrious answer. "How did they manage that?" asked I. "They cut the wires of the electric light, and in the darkness they got off, how I know not."

Now the reader must know that the previous evening the electric lights were found to be out of order. Not a light was burning, neither those in the house, nor the big ones in the yard. When it was discovered this official at once sent for an electrician to rectify the mistake. The man could not find the cause of the collapse, however. All that could be definitely discovered was that during the afternoon, whilst our servants were kicking their football about, it hit the wires, and the conclusion was that this shock had severed some connections up in the roof. (One day I will tell the true inwardness of this remarkable story!) Howbeit, the electrician could do nothing. We lit up our prison with candles, and the yard was lit up with the bright presence of fifteen extra Zarps, all on the *qui vive*. The authorities naturally were satisfied. No British officer can get through a cordon of

fifteen Zarps, be the night as black as Erebus, so thought they. Alas! vain are the hopes of man, especially when he relies on a Zarp. The next morning three British officers had disappeared. And the night was not so dark after all. How? Well, this also is another story. It will come in its place. I dare not reveal it now. My papers may be seized any day. Let me tell what happened. Remember, it was Majuba Day. At 8.30 we breakfasted, and had just received news that Cronjé's surrender was expected every moment, also Ladysmith's relief. Naturally this triple event caused us to feel greatly excited. Our guards and every one else seemed to be completely down on their luck. Like Milton's "Il Penseroso," they were "sober, steadfast, and demure." At about 9.30 a *possé* of corporals and police invaded the place. The inspector of police, a little fussy man, was dancing about the show. He had been here all last night from nine o'clock to three in the morning. And he was ready to lay £100 to 1s. that the officers did not escape during the hours of his vigil. Vigilant, was he? Oh! vigilant was not the word for it. He was Argus-eyed; he was here, there, and everywhere *at the same time;* nothing could escape his notice, not even a mosquito. Nothing, except a British officer! some one volunteered to say. This

set the little man off into a war-dance and a fresh panegyric on his mighty prowess and lynx-eyed qualities. He could lay an oath that they did not escape whilst his Ubiquitency bossed the show. Unfortunately for the lynx-eyed one, they . . . but that is another tale, as I said.

And now we were all requested to come outside the building, while it was being searched. What a hiding of diaries and letters there was! The pages of my manuscript I hid in a school-cupboard, in between the leaves of a number of Bibles. Police were placed inside the building to keep us outside. And then the search began. Under the roof the searchers found where the wires broke, being cut as they said. They also found a knife turned into a saw, wherewith a trap-door had been cut in the ceiling of the gymnasium. Through this door, according to their opinion, the officers must have crawled to cut the wires. The big dormitories, too, were searched for the missing men or for clues—beds and mattresses and cupboards and portmanteaux. But in vain. And all the while the fussy little man danced about in great excitement, looking for tracks and footmarks about the building. Supposing he had found these, what would he have done with them, I wonder? They would have brought him no nearer the fugitives. But, you

see, it is always good to lock the stable-door after the horse is stolen!

The next day an official told us that they knew where the officers were, and could lay hands on them any time—they were only waiting for daylight. How smart! Next day they apparently must have forgotten where to lay their hands so as to include the officers in that mighty grasp, for no capture was made. And let us hope that no capture will ever be made.

After Churchill's escape the papers blustered considerably. "We will soon have him"—"he will never elude the vigilance of our police"—and more such froth was uttered. *Now*, very curiously, all they say is "they do not believe *all* will manage to get out of the Transvaal." Also, say they, a place has been found where evidently they had passed the night and taken food. As if our hunted friends would pass the night in any other way but in making "a forward movement." By day they might rest, but not by night.

A great fuss was made over a Hollander town-guard (all the town-guards seem to be Hollanders) who reported that during the night of the escape he had chased a suspicious-looking party, but was prevented from catching him by a wire fence. But why did the valiant guard not jump off his horse

and over the fence and catch his quarry? Yes, echo answers, Why not? Of course he was not afraid! No Hollander ever is! But let him take this consolation to his heart—it was not an officer he had spotted—not at all.

Then our fussy little inspector heard of the "lair" referred to above. Bravely he rode out with a company of his merry mounted men. After a long search they found two young bank clerks on bicycles. Poor unfortunates, they were promptly marched off to prison on suspicion of having helped the officers to escape—and they had never even heard of the escape. And for this they were fined £10 each. Our fussy little officer was now happy.

Some days have elapsed since the escape, and every one—even our little man—is quite subdued now. After Churchill's escape we had to suffer for it, as told before. Now a corporal of police, the only gentlemanly fellow they had, was dismissed, and other changes were made in the *personnel*. The yard of our present home was cleared of all police tents and paraphernalia—so much the better for us, from a sanitary point of view especially—and trees and shrubs cut down, behind which we could possibly hide. And, says the paper, a thorough investigation is being made. Poor police, and nurses, and ladies! I suppose they will all be

suspected again as on the occasion of Churchill's escape.

But now comes the amusing part. On the Thursday after the escape, a letter was published in the daily *Volksstem* purporting to have been written by a "mother and sister of one at the front." (There's a conundrum for you.) This irate lady goes hammer and tongs for our gaoler. "Here he sits in luxury," says she, "whilst our relatives risk their lives at the front to catch the prisoners. Could he not guard them better?" She was sure that if the women had to do the guarding no officer would ever escape—and more to the same effect. This grieved the poor man sorely, for he had done his best. Had he not treated the officers as uncourteously as possible? Had he not sworn at them (behind their backs, of course)? Did he not lie on his back all day, in his hammock, and say "Not at home" when any one wanted him, or there was any duty to perform? Didn't he tell people, every one who wanted to know, whatever private news there was in the officers' letters, which he had to censor? Didn't he on all occasions forget to tell the truth, till he no longer could distinguish between it and falsehood? Didn't he do all this? And now to be blamed and exposed and suspected! And then the poor little fat man, badly in want of a bath and clean clothes, blubbered,

and said: "I know I've got the accursed Hollanders to thank for this. They just covet my billet, and now want to get me kicked out." Poor little man! Yes, chickens come home to roost. As you treat others so you will be treated yourself. They were a couple—this little dancing dervish of an inspector, spare as a walking-stick, and this gaoler, small, fat, forty, phlegmatic, and—but never mind. Drop the curtain. Only, from my heart I say, may our fugitive friends escape detection! Another chapter will tell of their adventures. I cannot write them down now. We might be searched again. Who knows?

CHAPTER XXXII

OUR GREAT TREK

EVER since December last we had been at stated intervals informed by our gaolers that the Government was going to move us to new quarters built for us north of the town, just outside it. Nothing came of this move, however. Later on we were informed that the new place was reserved for the Ladysmith prisoners—the Ladysmith they were *going* to take every day of the last four months, but never did. Since the last escape of officers, however, there was such agitation in the town, amongst the women, so we were told, that on Thursday, March 15th, we were informed that on the following morning we would be moved to the new quarters. What bustle and excitement there was that night; what packing and planning! Early on Friday some donkey wagons were loaded with our luggage and sent to the new quarters, about a mile

and a half away. We were sent off in cabs. The Commissioner of Police, the same man who had sentenced the vicious policeman I told you of before, *without, however, carrying out that sentence,* came to me twice to ask me kindly to inform the officers that he had purposely provided cabs, so that no crowd should gather to follow and annoy us.

"We have to show the world," said he, "that we are a civilised people." He expatiated on this sentiment at length. I thought at once that surely the Majuba of 1900 had already begun to make its influence felt. No such consideration would have been shown a despised prisoner before. Alas! I was reckoning without my host! My dream was doomed to a rude awakening. The awakening began immediately on arrival at the new premises, when we were invited to pay up for the cabs, *offered to us,* at 4s. per head, and look bright. My friend the Police Commissioner had kept up his Government's traditionary inability to tell the truth. The act was *not* one of courtesy—by no means. It was a little business transaction! The whole thing was a *show* of civilisation, there was no *reality* about it. It was barbarism with a gloss over it—and but very little of that too. How little will appear if you read further. On arrival at the new quarters we naturally had a look round at once to see what they were like.

Imagine our disgust when we found the building one fit only for cattle—in fact, a large cattle shed. This they call civilisation here! Let me give a description. The building was a long oblong shed of iron, with thin boarded ceiling and *mud* floor, small windows far up near the ceiling like those of a prison, and *no* ventilation at all. The building stood *down-grade*, too, one side being about 10 feet higher than the other. The roof was terraced, but not the floor—it just sloped down; beds and chairs had thus to be propped up to get anything like a level. Oh, it was a magnificent fraud! At the lower end of the building, which was 40 feet wide, were five bath-rooms, 8 feet by 8 feet each. Then came one tremendous bedroom of 80 *yards* by 40 *feet*, in which our whole colony of 120 prisoners slept, the beds standing in four long rows. Then followed the dining-room, 60 feet by 40 feet, with four rows of tables and benches fixed in the mud floor. A room of 15 feet by 40 feet was a further extension, subdivided into a kitchen, pantry, and servants' room. The latter occupied the higher level of the building, and some fool of a sanitary inspector had so arranged that all the scullery water run down the full length of the building, down the higher side of it, in a small furrow. The building ran from east to west, sloping down that way as

also from north to south. The whole was enclosed by barbed-wire fencing, the circuit being fully 600 yards. It was lit up at night by thirty-two large electric lights. The building itself was well lit by electricity—this being the only good feature about it. The other sanitary arrangements were such as any civilised community would be ashamed to use for prisoners. It was a disgrace! And then that official's proud dictum would ring in my ears, "We must show the world that we are a civilised people." Civilised? save the mark! We were all simply horrified and disgusted. A strong protest was at once drawn up and signed by all of us; we feared, however, that no notice would be taken of it. The prospect of a prolonged stay is a horrible one. We are still in the rainy season. Our floor is now alternately mud and dust. The health of more than one will break down, I fear. We try to make ourselves comfortable with pieces of wood on the floor, and spare blankets and bits of green baize. The Government have provided strips of linoleum to serve for carpets before each bed. Linoleum and dust, rugs and mud, beds and chairs at all imaginable angles, zinc-plate walls through which one could see the sun, moon, and stars, a variegated ceiling 11 feet high—imagine all this, and you have our cattle-pen. Why, the Kaffirs at Mafeking, for instance, are more

comfortably housed. Even our chief gaoler professed to be terribly disgusted, and so too, we were told, the State Secretary, Mr. Reitz. I have ma doots, however.

I mentioned above that we were informed that the women of Pretoria were anxious to have us thus incarcerated, so that no one should escape. I do not believe that, however. What I suspect is this.[1] The Hollander editor of the paper keenly advocated our removal. The Hollanders in the town had petitioned the Government, we were told, not to press the sentence passed upon the brutal Zarp I told of. These Hollanders, too, filled the place with insinuations and innuendoes against the officers, frightening everybody. And then they spread the report that the women—the Boer women—wished our removal. I gathered all this from many a hint dropped by some of the officials. A hundred Hollanders had come back from the Natal front to refit, or *refill*, I forget which! They were just the class of men capable of meanness like this, and they had the ear of the Government. Poor Hollander-ridden Government! And here we are now, in a place hardly suitable to stable horses in, and the civilised barbarism of the official is satisfied, quite satisfied, and he is happy. They have revenged

[1] This suspicion was afterwards verified.

themselves on helpless prisoners! I have *heard* that Kaffirs do the same thing! I have *seen* it done here!

We have been here now for about three weeks. Eight days after our protest against this "hole" had been sent in the Committee in charge of this place visited us to investigate matters. The Landdrost of Pretoria, Mr. Schutte, is their chairman. He is a very venerable-looking man, and, I believe, a straight man. I have a suspicion that he has been made a tool and a fool of by the younger and more hot-headed patriots on the Committee and round the President, always fawning on him and flattering him all day long. This Mr. Schutte asked to be introduced to me, and was very courteous. He told me that he and the Committee had condemned our new quarters, but that the officials of the Public Works Department had over-ridden their objections. He promised then that they would make several most urgently necessary improvements. This was two weeks ago, but *nothing* has as yet been done. Transvaal Government "to-days" are always "to-morrows," and consequently never come. Their way of doing business reminds me of a story that used to fetch me when I was a little boy. There was a certain shopkeeper who did what he could to attract customers. Amongst others he hit upon the

following device. He hung up cards everywhere in his shop on which was printed the following legend, "To-day you pay, to-morrow you don't." This drew large numbers of people "to-day" to make small cash purchases. "To-morrow" they returned again to make their "gratis" big purchases. Alas! there the legend stared them in the face: "*To-day* you pay, *to-morrow* you don't"—it was always *to-day*, of course. So it is here. The *to-morrow*, the *next week* of their *Government* promises, *never* comes! In our case they will very likely wait till some of us are down with typhoid fever, and then, too, till the disease has ended fatally for one or more, just as was done in the case of *several* prisoners of war who had been cast into the common gaol.[1]

It is indeed an ill-wind, however, that blows nobody any good. And this we too have experienced now. The wind was not so ill but that it blew us some good.

I mentioned before that the Hollander machinations resulted in our being shifted to this place. But it also resulted in more. Since the last escapes these dear patriots, who pretend to love the Trans-

[1] After three weeks some drainage pipes were laid, and a few sanitary changes made—not much of an improvement, however.

vaal, whilst they are seeking only *self* and self-aggrandisement, have been dropping insinuations that our gaolers were not the right men in the right place. They were quite right as regards the chief gaoler, Opperman, but not as regards the second, who was a cultured gentleman. But the result of these insinuations was that our gaolers were dismissed, and also our guards, composed of the Zarps I have before described, whilst a *Hollander* gaoler and *Hollander* guards were appointed. Nobody was sorry to see the first go, but all grieved for the loss of the obliging doctor. The new gaoler has hitherto been exceedingly courteous and gentlemanly. If he continues in the course adopted he will be an immense improvement upon his predecessor. This little incident, however, illustrates clearly how things are done here. *Transvaalers* are kicked out of good positions to make room for intriguing *Hollanders*. The Transvaal leaders know it, and yet they do not; they see it, and yet they see not. If this war had not taken place there would in a few years' time have been not a *Transvaal* Republic, but a *Hollander* Republic with a Hollander (Leyds ?) President. Poor, deluded Transvaal! This same gaoler, Opperman, apeing the President, often told me how useful the Hollanders were, in fact, a pillar of the State; *now*—well, his language

won't bear repetition. Let me say it again: had this objectionable Hollander element not been inroduced into the country by Kruger and his satellites, this war would not have come, and Transvaal independence would never have been endangered. I but endorse the opinion of many and many a sober-thinking, genuine Transvaaler. But there are none so blind as those who will not see. And for such wilful blindness one always has to pay dearly. Here the payment will be a terrible one—a degrading one.

Friend Opperman has now gone to the front, accompanied by his friends the Zarps. His rival, the Hollander, enjoys the *otium cum dignitate* here. The former risks his own life at the front; the latter sits in safety and spouts patriotism and bunkum. Opperman deserves all he gets, and yet the pity of it!

Poor Transvaal—deluded Transvaaler!

CHAPTER XXXIII

A LOST CHANCE

THE Transvaal Government did not make use of its last chance referred to in a former chapter. There was an attempt to make peace, but it was an impertinent, bungling one, and of course failed. In the chapter on Majuba I tried to point out how little right the Transvaal Government has to expect special Divine interference in their favour. My opinion has been strengthened since then by after events. Let me refer to a few of these. They throw light on "the lost chance."

The President visited the Free State after Majuba Day, and addressed the burghers at Bloemfontein. In the course of his speech he said: "It was on Majuba Day that General Cronjé surrendered. It was on that memorable day that Ladysmith had to be given up. Was it not because God wished to punish us for making that day a day for boasting

instead of returning thanks for the great victory given by Him to our armies?" (*Standard-and Diggers' News*, March 8, 1900). This is fine *talk*. But what does the President *do*? To-day (beginning of April) his burghers are still kept in ignorance of the number taken with Cronjé, and of the real events of that memorable fight. When Lord Roberts was marching victoriously on Bloemfontein *official* telegrams informed the people that the British were fleeing in all directions, after Abraham's Kraal. The President *knew* of these lies, but never said a word! The Boer forces are driven out of the vicinity of Colenso and Ladysmith; they *retreat* in an awful hurry to the Biggarsbergen. There was some terrible fighting in those days in Natal. The English losses they put down at thousands. And their own? Listen: the official report said fifteen killed and twenty-five wounded —forty casualties. They left all their positions because they suffered forty casualties! Is this true? Then certainly they were arrant cowards. If not, then they are abominable liars. Cowards or liars! Not much to choose from. This is what the President and his Government *do*. How different to his *talk!*

More still. He appeals to the American people for sympathy on November 10, 1899. His appeal begins

thus: "The main question in dispute between this Government and that of England was in regard to the *Franchise.*" This is what he *says.* What does he *do?* He allows his mouthpieces, the two newspapers and the officials and the Commandants everywhere, to proudly aver that they fight because of the "Age of Injustice that is past," because of their hatred of England, because they want to drive the English out of South Africa, as the insulting leading article of the *Volksstem,* March 8, 1900, told us.

Oh, what a degrading spectacle to find a President who *approves* of misstatements (let us call them so) whilst he stands up thanking God that he is better than the English Government and people!

No wonder, then, that the infatuated Presidents, Kruger and Steyn, could pen the following proposal to Lord Salisbury: "The blood and tears which have been shed by thousands in connection with the present war, and the prospect which prevails of the ruin of all moral and economic conditions in South Africa, make it necessary for both the parties to the war, in the strongest and most emphatic manner, and as in the sight of the Triune God, to ask why they are at war with each other, and whether the objects they have

in view justify them in the continuance of such a terrible and heartrending conflict. For these reasons, and seeing that a number of her British Majesty's statesmen have declared that this war was commenced and has been carried out with the express purpose of undermining her Majesty's rule in South Africa, and in order to establish a Government wholly independent of that of her Majesty throughout the whole South Africa, we consider it to be our duty to solemnly declare that this war was commenced only as a defensive measure, with the object of preserving the threatened independence of the South Africa Republic, and is only being proceeded with with a view to the securing of the unquestionable status of the two Republics as sovereign international States, and for the preservation of that status and for the purpose of securing that those of her Majesty's subjects who have taken part with us in this war should not suffer, either in person or property." Is it possible to imagine any statement more misleading? The States declare war, and then they say they did not want it. They say they undertook the war purely as a defensive measure, and at the very start they invade Natal and the Cape Colony, whilst their battlecry is "Table Mountain!" Then they want protection and immunity for "her Majesty's subjects who have taken

part with us in this war"—for *rebels*, in other words—men whom they have invited to become rebels by spurious promises, or compelled to become such by force. These foolish people must take Lord Salisbury for a fool; in this supposition, however, they found themselves vastly mistaken.

But let me proceed with the despatch. "In this way, and in this way alone, we are still, as we have been in the past, desirous of securing the restoration of peace in South Africa, and of bringing to an end the calamitous war which at present rages in South Africa.

"Should her Majesty's Government, however, have definitely decided that the two Republics are to be destroyed then there remains for us and our people nothing but to continue in their present struggle to the end in spite of the overwhelming might of the British Empire, in the confident trust that the God who has implanted in our hearts, and in the hearts of our fathers, the inextinguishable love of freedom will not forsake us, but will complete His purposes in us and our posterity."

Love of freedom! Alas! the Government has no idea of the meaning of the word freedom. Licence—that is what they understand. Liberty—there is not a man in the Transvaal to-day who dares differ from the high officials in his opinion of men and

matters. If he does, and is a non-burgher, he is put over the border at once. Is he a burgher, not belonging to a big family clique, he is ordered to shut up. If he is an influential man he is bribed. And then they dare say this is the love of liberty God has implanted in their hearts! But it was a slip of the pen, I suppose. They meant love of tyranny and oppression. And to ascribe this to the Almighty is blasphemy. Last Sunday one of their clergymen spoke from the pulpit about the burghers' disobedience and disorderliness in the field. He told them that even a youngster of *sixteen years* had dared to insult the late General Joubert in the lager. *And nothing was done to him*, for was he not a burgher, and are the burghers not free? Chickens come home to roost. This is the doctrine Krugerites loved to preach, applying it to non-Transvaalers, to whom they could do what they liked. England I call a free country; and we Cape Colonists enjoy real liberty, but not the unhappy, misguided Transvaalers.

But to continue. "We have hesitated to make this declaration to your Excellency at an earlier date, because we feared that, so long as we were victorious, and our army continued to occupy defensive positions at a distance within her Majesty's territories, such a declaration would have wounded

the honourable feeling of the British nation. Now that the prestige of the British Empire may be considered as having been preserved by the fact that a portion of our troops has been captured by the forces of her Majesty, and now that they have consequently been compelled to evacuate the positions which have been held by them, now that that difficulty is removed, we are not justified in longer hesitating to make clear to yourself and your people why we fight, and on what basis we are prepared to restore peace!"

How kind and condescending! And while this communication is on its way to Lord Salisbury the Transvaal Government's puppets and mouthpieces are publishing the most disgustingly false and insulting statements regarding our Queen and Empire, and particularly regarding Lord Roberts and his army. Aye, their hope will be justified, I fear—"God will complete His purposes in us and our posterity." His purposes are that they must be honest and upright as were their fathers, as the real, genuine Transvaaler to-day is still, but not hypocritical and false as the Government clique to-day is. We all know how dignified and decisive Lord Salisbury's answer was to this impertinent peace proposal. Let me quote one sentence: "This great calamity has been the penalty

which Great Britain has suffered for having in recent years acquiesced in the existence of the two Republics. In view of the use to which the two Republics have put the position which was given to them, and the calamities which their unprovoked attack has inflicted upon her Majesty's dominions, her Majesty's Government can only answer your Honours' telegram by saying that they are not prepared to assent to the independence of the South African Republic or of the Orange Free State." And thus Kruger *lost his chance!*

Bloemfontein is already occupied by the British troops and the greater part of the Free State is conquered. Soon Lord Roberts will advance and the same fate overtake Pretoria and the Transvaal. When it is too late this wilfully blind Government will rue its folly and dishonesty. Their punishment will be a hard one, but fully deserved. Then peace and prosperity will come to South Africa, under a flag which guarantees *real liberty*. England, I know, will not repeat the mistakes of 1879–81. No, the right men will be appointed to rule. The appointment of Mr. J. G. Fraser as an official at Bloemfontein guarantees this. And the result will be that the sensible Transvaaler and Free Stater, experiencing what liberty really is, will soon become a most loyal subject, and then feel grateful that Paul Kruger has now *lost his chance*.

CHAPTER XXXIV

IN THE CATACOMBS

I CAN now finish the story of the escape of our three friends, as I promised to do in a former chapter. The reader will remember that on the morning of Majuba Day three British officers were missing, and great was the search made for them inside the building as well as over the surrounding country. All in vain, however, and very naturally so, as will appear from the following. What really happened was this. Some of the officers had cut the electric wires in the roof of the Model School down to a single strand. A piece of twine was attached to the wire where the incision was made, and let down through the roof to the bedroom below. The plan was that at about ten o'clock that evening, the 26th, an officer in the room would jerk the string, thus breaking the wire and putting all the lights out. In the ensuing darkness,

before the guards could be increased, some ten or twelve would then try to escape. This special evening was fixed on, because we expected that our removal to the new quarters prepared for the officers would take place the next day. It was believed that the triple combination—viz., the Majuba Day reverses, the officers' escape, and the removal next morning of so large a number and its consequent bustle and excitement—would facilitate the escape of the fugitives.

Unfortunately the football, as related before, spoiled the *coup* that had to come off at ten o'clock on the night of the 26th, and the guards were accordingly strengthened before any one could get away.

The three officers who eventually got away were, however, determined to make a try. And this was what they did. The Model School is a big building and fairly high, resting on foundations about 2½ feet above the ground. Under every one of the large rooms, therefore, there was an opening of about 20 by 20 feet and 2½ feet high. Our three comrades opened a screwed down trap-door which led into these *catacombs* below, from their own room, and descended during the night, before the discovery next morning took place. Another officer in the room drew his bed over the door, and everything in the room proceeded as if nothing had happened.

Next morning, accordingly, when the discovery of the escape took place, and the hue and cry was raised, our three friends were comfortably, or rather uncomfortably, housed in the catacombs under the very feet of their eager, anxious would-be captors. The reader can imagine our keen enjoyment of the situation. It was as good as a farce to see our gaoler and the police rushing up and down in great excitement, peering behind doors and under beds, searching for the fugitives in all possible and impossible places, whilst all along, like the "beautiful stars" of the song, they were "so near and yet so far." Verily this was our Christmas pantomime!

But now cometh the tragedy. During the day we discovered that the report of our contemplated removal was a premature one. The new quarters were not ready yet, and would not be for some time to come. This meant that our friends down below would have to wait and live in the catacombs for an indefinite period. How could they come up and surrender? But, also, how could they live in the darkness and circumscribed space and damp for any length of time? What now? Let me mention here that our friends were fed through the trap-door, and that we held communication with them mostly by writing notes. And so it came about that I received a letter from below, after a few days, from

Captain Haldane, asking me to ascertain from the authorities if we were going to be removed, and if so, when. I was also requested, in case the first query was answered in the affirmative, to try to hurry our departure and consequent release of our entombed friends. Well, the answer I obtained was most positively affirmative: "You will be moved as soon as the new place is ready, for there you can be guarded much more securely." We knew already what "soon" meant in the vocabulary of the authorities, so I set about finding some means of accelerating their movements. I took our gaoler apart and said to him, very solemnly and seriously, "Remove us as soon as possible." "Why?" asked he. "The lights in the new place are not in yet, and we can't get workmen enough." "Well," said I, "hurry up—that's all I can advise you to do." "But why?" asked he again. I looked solemn and gloomy, and said, "Do you want to wake one morning and find yourself dead?" "What do you mean?" asked he, as his face visibly paled. "Half a word is enough to him of good understanding," I answered. "But do you know or hear of anything —any conspiracy, any plot?" and beads of perspiration stood on his forehead. "Certainly not," said I, "for if so I would assuredly not tell you. Only I judge by the signs of the times—four officers gone,

reverses for your troops everywhere—look out—move us at once." Our guardian angel was now thoroughly frightened, and immense was the pressure brought to bear on the authorities and workmen. And we too were anxious to be away, as our quarters were becoming dangerously crowded, and we were told the new quarters were so comfortable. What otherwise would have taken four or five weeks certainly was now accomplished in about seventeen days.

Daily our poor friends down below were fed and cheered by good news from the front, and words of comfort for themselves. But gradually their position and condition were becoming unbearable. Imagine, therefore, their joy and relief when it was notified that the removal would take place on Friday morning, March 16th. And so it did. Our friends were provided with as much as they could carry for a long, weary march towards Delagoa Bay, and our last goodbyes were said. I still have in my possession, and treasure highly, Captain Haldane's last note to me. And thus full of expectation and suppressed excitement we were off at about eleven in the morning. That night, as we know now, our three friends coolly walked out of their living tomb, and out of Pretoria, and out of captivity. After innumerable hardships and many dangers and narrow

escapes they reached Lorenco Marques, tired and ill and worn, but full of pluck still, and rejoicing in their regained liberty. Needless to say we heartily rejoiced with them when some weeks later we heard of their good fortune. But yet, when we think of it all, we cannot repress a smile. It was all so ludicrous — our little dancing Dervish Police Superintendent poking his little stick into every corner, and our perspiring, trembling gaoler following him everywhere and inciting him to still closer search and bolder efforts. And all the while they were literally standing on and walking over the heads of the very fugitives they were looking for — heads bowed low underneath in the catacombs! How sick and disgusted these officials must have been when they learned the true story and whole inwardness of this second escape! I can still hear the little Police Superintendent (a German) say, "Eschape is impossible; I and mine polices are too vide avake!" One could not teach anybody anything in this country. What they did not know was not worth knowing. Did they not know that England could never win, and that no foreign Power would allow them to be conquered? This is what they knew. What they knew *not* was that their leaders had deceived them as to England's power and the attitude of

the other countries. And was not this worth knowing? Aye, had they but known! If they could but have had honest and true rulers all this misery and bloodshed would not have come over the country. Verily the ex-Transvaal Government has much to answer for!

But to return to our three escaped friends. Captain Haldane and Lieutenant le Mesurier managed to keep together, but lost Brockie after some days. Let me tell what happened to the latter before I close this chapter—the story of the former has been told in several papers already.

After losing his companions Brockie made his way out alone to the Portuguese border. The last station on the Transvaal side is Komati Poort, the first on the Portuguese side is Ressano Garcia, and in between is the bridge over the Komati River. The two stations are little more than a mile apart, the river being the boundary between the two countries. Brockie eventually arrived at the Komati Poort Station, looking for all the world like a dilapidated tramp. He felt convinced that only bounce and the proverbial tramp's cheek could now help him out of as tight a corner as one could well get into. He had a fund of both, fortunately, and so marches up boldly to the manager of the refreshment room, and playing the *rôle* of tramp in the

uttermost stages of destitution begs to be taken on as barman. The manager has compassion on him, and soon our hero is installed behind the bar, where he does the honours worthily. Inside the bar-room there is a Government notice on the wall—it is a description of the three fugitive officers, and an offer of reward for any one recapturing them. There are men reading this notice and discussing it. Brockie joins the group and launches forth, as a good and loyal *burgher* of the State, in fierce invective against the English in general and the escaped officers in particular! He tells all and sundry what he would do in case he caught them, and promises drinks all round when he takes the reward. Little did the others surmise how near "the reward" they were standing themselves, and how easily they could have earned it.

For a few days Brockie played his part of barman to perfection, selling wines and beer, the sale of spirits being prohibited in the Transvaal during the war. Then, all of a sudden, the manager noticed that his model barman was seized with ague, a precursor of fever—and Komati Poort is a frightful fever hole. What now? With chattering teeth Brockie himself makes a suggestion. "Give me some money," said he, "and I'll go over to the Portuguese side to buy whisky." "But the bridge

is guarded," said the manager. "I'll square the sentry," answered Brockie. And off he crawls—didn't he have the ague terribly! Moaning and miserable he approached the sentry and begs to be allowed over the bridge, just to get a little whisky for himself and his manager, who was seized with ague even worse than himself. He begged so piteously and promised the sentry such a grand share for himself, that with an injunction to return at once he was allowed to cross over. Brockie, be it known, had timed his ague and expedition very nicely—just when he knew that a train on the other side was ready to start for Lorenco Marques. And so over the bridge he crawled, and over the intervening ground, and when the sentry was out of sight, he ran, fresh and strong and healthy, till he reached the station. Never was man so quickly relieved of ague—it was a marvellous and quick cure. It must have affected Brockie's mind, however, for instead of returning at once and bringing the thirsty, longing sentry the whisky he had promised him, this absent-minded beggar of a fugitive took a seat in the train, and was whirled away to Delagoa Bay! How could he be so forgetful! They say that oft in the silent midnight watches a sentry's impatient steps can be heard on the Komati bridge, and in between the curses deep and heavy, over the waters

of the river ever floats the sad refrain of the song that sentry sings: "Oh, where and oh, where has my whisky-bottle gone?" And the crocodiles crawl out on the banks, and each one wipes a tear from the other's eye. Thus Brockie escaped.

CHAPTER XXXV

OUR INFORMATION BUREAU

IT is hard enough to be a prisoner, but when an unfortunate prisoner, thirsting for news from the outside world, is compelled to be satisfied with the most unreliable and wilfully perverted statements, then indeed his lot is a most pitiable one! And such in very deed was our condition.

The Transvaal Government allowed the publication of no paper, except its own inspired organs. And these were two in number—the *Standard and Diggers' News*, and the *Volksstem*, published at Johannesburg and Pretoria respectively. These two papers were simply Government organs, and dared publish nothing the President or the Executive disapproved of. No independent judgment was allowed to be exercised in this unhappy country, no one dared offer adverse criticism. There is no free Press and no free speech. Any one who dared

say of and to the Government what, for instance, the *South African News* or *Ons Land* in the Cape Colony published in every issue, would find himself within the four walls of a prison cell in no time. This muzzling of the Press was an egregious error on the part of the Republics, and a fruitful source of frightful evil. Let me mention only one result, already referred to. Every one knew that the statements of the above-mentioned papers were approved of by the authorities. Every intelligent reader soon found out that the majority of these statements—the war news especially—was frightfully and wilfully misleading, if not purely false. Both the papers and the Government continually invoked God's blessing, and expressed their belief in the righteousness of their cause. To what conclusion had the intelligent reader to come now? "Our cause is just," so the authorities and the papers say—and yet these papers tell such horribly false tales, and the authorities allow this. A *just cause*, bolstered up by *disgraceful lies*—surely something is wrong somewhere. No wonder that one result was this—*public confidence* was shaken; no one knew what to believe. A medical gentleman—one of the Transvaal—said to me: "I do not read the papers any more. One cannot believe anything they say." "But how can a professedly Christian Government

allow such lies to be published, and, what is more, allow the papers to call their news *official?*" said I. "That is what I cannot understand," said the doctor; "something is radically wrong somewhere." And this opinion I have heard many a one express.

No wonder that we poor prisoners pined for true news. And we got it too. Let me tell the reader *how.*

During the first weeks of our imprisonment we were permitted to buy only the *Volksstem,* from whose disgraceful columns nothing could be culled but insult to our Queen and abuse of everything English. As for the war news—why, it was simply a farce. In a few weeks' time they had killed off thousands of British troops, whilst their own losses amounted to next to nothing. As an officer expressed it in verse—

> "Five thousand British now lie low,
> One Boer is wounded in the toe.
> Such is the news you learn to know
> In prison!"

I do not mean to say that our English and Colonial papers never told tall yarns. Oh no! But when they published a telegram from "Roberts to High Commissioner," giving the news of the war, then every one knew it was absolutely correct. What was *official* was *true.* And this was *not* the case in the

Transvaal. Extracts from the papers I have given before prove this sufficiently. After Churchill's escape the paper was forbidden us, and the idea was that we should be cut off entirely from all sources of information. What now? Well, all we could do was to practise self-help. And it was done, too, most successfully. Let me mention instances. Now and then a relative or friend visited me, and from them I managed to get some information which I knew was always absolutely correct. Thus, *e.g.*, in December already we learned that the Transvaal had to supply the Free State with food and money, as the resources of the latter State were practically exhausted. Up to the time of our removal to the second prison the Government allowed us to hire a cook, a Colonial coloured boy, who, unknown to the authorities, was a British subject. We provided him with money, and the old boy faithfully smuggled in the papers for us, even a Natal paper occasionally. How he managed to escape detection is a marvel, as he was searched both when he came and departed. One thing in his favour was this: he could put on a look of angelic innocence such as I have seldom seen before. And should a Zarp or gaoler warn him, or suggest only anything of this kind on his part, a look of injured innocence so perfect, so pathetic crept over old Johnnie's features that one

felt inclined to apologise for ever having been so cruel, so mean, as to suspect him. Old Johnnie was an old man, and used to slouch wearily and heavily through the streets as he came and went, and he pretended to be so deaf and stupid! Why? Oh, that was his cuteness, to listen to the conversation of the passers-by, and thus pick up threads of information. Arrived at our prison he detailed to us and others what he had culled during his peregrinations. And how we snatched at every straw! Yes, old Johnnie, you were a most successful newsmonger, and we always looked forward eagerly every morning to your Kaffir-grams!

Another source of information was the Zarp himself. Some of us were always prowling about hoping to pick up some of our guards' conversation and thus gather news. As the men spoke generally in Dutch, however, I was, perhaps, the most successful in obtaining Zarpigrams. I used to go out occasionally when I saw them talking excitedly and slowly walk past with a look on my face as if I were weighed down by deep thought on the most abstruse of philosophical problems, trying to solve the vexed question of the exact number of spirits that could find dancing space on the point of a needle, or some other problem of similar practical importance. All the time my ears were strained to catch up every

word, as only a news-hungering prisoner can strain his ears. And very often I did pick up some important bits of news. Let me give a few. It was late one Sunday evening when I overheard a Zarp telling his companion that he had been in the church that night, where all the people were so deeply moved when the minister told them that Government had informed him that "up to Spion Kop the Boer losses *in Natal* were 500 killed." "What!" said the other, "500 killed in Natal alone? Is it not horrible?" "Yes," repeated the first one, "500 in Natal. And then the minister prayed so tenderly for the widows and the orphans."

Now the papers had led us to believe that the losses had been very slight. Naturally my repetition of the news to the officers caused great sensation. Then I heard this too one day. Early in the year there were reports that the great General Joubert had been wounded, or was killed, or was dying. There was no certainty, it seems. Discussing the matter I heard a Zarp say to another, "Won't the Hollanders be glad if the General dies?" "Yes," said the other, "they never liked him because he never could stand their underhand ways." Said the first speaker: "If General Joubert had had his way we never would have had the Hollander here, nor this terrible war."

Another source of information was the hospital. There was always a sick or a wounded officer in there, and till we were moved to the other place friends were allowed to see them. The matron and nurses and several of the attendants in hospital were exceedingly kind, and many of them sympathised heartily with our cause. They gave the invalids news and also papers, which we, when we visited the hospital, again casually became possessors of. And thus we were supplied with hospital-grams. And they were always more reliable than the newspaper telegrams—their sources were purer. But not always, as proves the following instance. At the time of the Spion Kop disaster I was in hospital, myself unfortunately. When the first bits of news began to come in our gaoler came to my room in attendance on a visitor. When the latter had departed he told me, with a very serious face, that he had just come from the President, who had read out to him the following telegram (I took it down at the time): "British fleeing in all directions. Have killed 3,000; taken 2,000 prisoners; still disarming; will take 6,000 at least. Whole British army back over the Tugela; 1,000 drowned in the river." Well, I challenge any American paper to tell a taller yarn. Of course I was greatly moved by the frightful news. "And now," said I, panting with excitement, "what

will Buller do?" "Well," said he, "the soldiers won't fight any more. The officers have turned their cannon on them, threatening to shoot if they do not advance. It is all up." "And how does the President take it?" asked I anxiously, dreading the effect that this tale might have on the old man. "The tears are rolling down his eyes," said my gaoler, "and all he says is just this: 'God is good; God is good.'" "Yes," thought I, for I dared not say it, "good in that He does not let an Ananias fate overtake you." Next morning I saw my friend again, and when I opened the subject of this Munchausen story he said, with a hangdog look, "There was a mistake in the wire; about 200 prisoners only were taken." "And the killed and the drowned?" I asked innocently, "was that correct?" But he heard me not. A look so far, and withal so innocent, stole over his features that I could not repeat my question when he asked me so kindly, "And how are you this morning? Much better?" And thus the subject dropped. Only—and the reader anticipates my question—who told the fairy tale originally: the gaoler, the telegraphist, or the Pr——? But stop! Solve the riddle at your leisure. Let my story move on.

Another source: a magistrate had been captured by the Boer forces in Zululand and brought to Pretoria, accompanied by his wife and little

daughter of about four years. Mr. Hignett, the magistrate, was quartered with us, whilst his wife and child stayed in a private boarding-house. A generous Government allowed Mrs. Hignett to come and see her husband once every two weeks in the gaoler's room and under his supervision. The brave lady, therefore, thought out a plan. She managed to convey to her husband in one of her visits a code of signals. She wrote out carefully what the different colours she should happen to wear would mean—colours of flowers and ribbons. For instance, *white*, with certain combinations, would mean good news from Ladysmith, and with other combinations bad news, and so on. And thus she had planned a code for Natal, Free State, Kimberley, and Mafeking—a simple and effective one. Then, as she walked past the prison, her husband made a note of everything she wore, and decoded the message. Aye, and how we grouped round him to hear the news! The brave lady and her dear little child passed by every day. How we looked foward to that coming! Verily her visits were an angel's visits. But there was a sad side to it all the same. The sweetly little girlie was passionately fond of her father, and as they were such utter strangers her mother could not leave her alone at home, but always had to bring

her along. And then, whenever they passed our prison, the little one would burst out crying and stretch out her arms to her father so pathetically that we on-lookers, who had dear little ones far away, could not bear to witness the sight. It was heartrending. On the day we were taken to the new prison I was standing close to Mr. Hignett. His wife and child had managed, taking advantage of the crowd, to sidle up close to him. Before a Zarp could interfere the little one sprung forward and flung her arms round her father's neck, sobbing bitterly, moaning with broken voice, "Come home, Daddie; come home with us." It was a piteous sight. It brought a mist before many an eye. The guard grumbled a little, but allowed the father to hold his girl in his arms for a while and say a few words to the mother. Then came the goodbye and the tearing asunder. And as we moved off the last we heard was the bitter wail of the dear little girl. How our hearts ached!

After a while, especially after our quarters had been shifted, did not the plucky butcher- and baker-boys smuggle in papers, and mumble the news to our soldier-cook as they delivered their wares? All honour to those plucky fellows. Their butcher- and baker-grams were sources of great comfort and excitement too to us.

But now I must tell of the grandest achievement of all. It was in the month of December already that we noticed a gentleman, always accompanied by a couple of large dogs, passing our quarters regularly every day. He usually seemed greatly excited, whirling his walking-stick about his head most energetically. He was quickly known as the dog-man. At first we could not interpret his manœuvres; but soon we did. He wanted to draw our attention, and when he perceived that he had succeeded in doing it he sidled up as near the iron railings of our prison as he dared, and tried to impart information by emitting short, disjected sentences. Thus one would hear him grunt: "Keep heart; things not so bad." "Battalions of troops coming." "White doing splendidly." "Can't touch Kimberley." "Little Mafeking makes them sit up," &c. Naturally after this discovery we eagerly watched for the advent of the dog-man and his dog-grams every day. But he grew bolder. In a little while he began signalling as he walked past with his stick and handkerchief, giving us the latest bits of news, informing us, too, who he was. Let me tell about this brave gentleman. His name is Patterson, and he was one of the chief clerks in the telegraph department. He is an old resident in the Transvaal and a burgher, but remained an English-

man in sympathies, and would not fight against his countrymen. As one of the chief clerks in the office he had ample opportunity of becoming acquainted with the authentic news that came in from the front. He himself often had to decode cipher messages. And now his heart just yearned to give us the news. He began in the way I indicated, but did not stop there. Just opposite the Staats Model School, our prison, is another corner house, such as ours was. We knew not who lived there, but we could see the inhabitants were friendly, at all events. Imagine our surprise, then, when one day we saw our friend Patterson standing in the long passage of the opposite house signalling vigorously with a little white flag. How excited we were! An officer—Captain Burrowes—immediately went inside and signalled back through the upper panes of the opposite window. The lower window was of frosted glass, as it was a school. And this fact was of immense importance to us. Captain Burrowes could now get on a box and signal through the upper window, and thus escape detection by the guards. Aye, it was an immense scheme and an immense success! Our friend used to come three times a day, generally before our meals, to signal the latest. Captain Burrowes would then write the "wire" and hand it round as we sat at table. How our hearts beat!

What suppressed excitement reigned supreme! And when the news was good, as it generally was then (from February 1st), how happy every face seemed! Verily, many a day we almost forgot we were captives; and there were days when the excitement caused by specially good news was painfully intense. Let me give an example of how well Patterson served us. Cronjé surrendered at 7 a.m. on Majuba Day, February 27, 1900. At 11 a.m. our friend had signalled the news to us! We knew it practically as soon as the President, and before the world knew anything; yes, and days before the Transvaal people were told of it. Was it not grand? We dared not let out that we knew, of course; that would create suspicion. Nor could we openly show our elation. But in our rooms and corridors many a pathetic scene was enacted. We pressed one another's hands silently, but firmly. Tear-dimmed eyes looked into others suspiciously misty. "God save the Queen" we said as we joined hands, and hummed softly as we walked about.

Aye, such experiences must be gone through, lived through. One cannot describe them. Reader, you cannot understand what all this was to us, for you were free. We were prisoners, and that made all the difference. I can still see my good friend, Captain Burrowes, quietly, solemnly

stalk up to our little prison corner, where I used to sit at my little table, and with solemn voice tell me the latest before it was made public. How happy, how amusing he always was! Yes, Captain, we will not forget one another in a hurry; will we? Let me give one of Patterson's telegrams. On Friday, February 16th, he signalled: "Kitchener relieved Kimberley. Hurrah! Last night at midnight our (Boer) telegraph clerk reported 'British are on us and we fled with General de la Rey.' Hurrah! Just had bottle of fizz on it!" And this we received at eight o'clock in the morning!

But better still. Patterson was getting so reckless in his desire to help us, that we had to ask him to be more careful. His coming up so often, during the day especially, we thought would create suspicion. Imagine what the brave fellow did then? He taught the daughters of the gentleman living in the house, Mr. Cullingworth, flag-signalling. And every one can understand our enthusiasm when one morning we saw the ladies signalling away bravely. Their little sister stood outside in the garden on the *qui vive* for Zarps and detectives or other passers-by. And it was most interesting and amusing to us to watch how quietly and cutely the little girl gave warning of the approach of any one.

Then came a sad day. Just when we were being shifted to our new quarters both Patterson and Cullingworth were commandeered to go to the front. We afterwards learned that both were imprisoned for refusing to fight, and released only when Lord Roberts entered Pretoria. The young ladies signalled before we left that they would still try to give us news. And several times, when there was good news, they strolled past the prison fences, signalling with their handkerchiefs. Soon, however, this became impracticable, as nobody was allowed within half a mile of our premises. The end had then fortunately already come within sight, however. An amusing episode every day was the arrival of the *Volksstem*, which we were now again allowed to buy. We found that as a rule the Dutch part contained more and better war news than the English columns of the paper. On its arrival, therefore, a large circle was generally formed around me, whilst I translated the Dutch columns. This was always an interesting event, causing great amusement—especially the correspondence column—but also disgust and indignation.

The doctor who visited us in our new prison was a Hollander, a courteous and kindly gentleman. From him I managed to draw scraps of information whilst talking about mutual acquaintances in

Holland, and in Utrecht especially, and whilst consulting him about a headache that was going to come, or an indigestion that might ensue given certain conditions, or a certain undetectable and unlocalised pain. Yea, I did often succeed in pumping the good medico thoroughly dry. Such is the news one learns to know in prison!

All honour to the brave Patterson and the brave Cullingworths. Is it wonder that the officers made them a handsome presentation after Pretoria's occupation; that Lord Roberts publicly thanked them for their brave deed, and took tea with the Cullingworths in their home? Is it wonder? Were they not most brave and daring? Remember detection would have meant horrible punishment. Once more, then, all honour to these brave hearts![1] They will never know how they helped us to bravely wait and hope till the sun of victory once more brightly illumined us! Such was our information bureau!

[1] I have since learnt that her Majesty the Queen has suggested to Lord Roberts that their brave act shall be officially taken notice of.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE BRITISH OFFICER AND HIS PASTIME

EVER since I was a college lad, many years ago, I have been a keen cricketer. In those days *the* matches of the season were the Western Province *v.* Garrison matches. How well I remember them; how keenly we enjoyed them! And ever since then I have known military officers. In late years, up in the north, in Bechuanaland and Rhodesia, I learned to know more of the brave men who helped open up the country and build the Empire there, and many were the friendships I formed. And now I have for many months been a fellow-prisoner of the British officer. I have lived with him under the same roof, I have come in daily contact with him, and learnt to know him intimately. And from the very bottom of my heart I say I have learnt to respect and value and love him. The British officer is a gentleman and a fine one withal. His self-restraint, his

resourcefulness, his in many cases splendid intellectual development, his invariable courtesy, his kindness, his courage, have taught me honestly and fervently to admire him. What the officers were to me during my term of imprisonment I can never forget and never repay. Is it wonder that bonds of firm and intimate friendship were laid between us? Aye, I love to recall their names and faces, and the many, many happy and profitable hours we spent together. I came among them a stranger, but in a few minutes' time I felt I had been admitted into their circle and been made one of them. I am not an Englishman; I belong to a different race. But the bond of a common loyalty and a common suffering drew us together and soon made us firm and fast friends. Thrown together day and night, character study becomes inevitable, and I believe that a prisoner sooner lays bare his inmost peculiarities, exhibiting his weaknesses especially, than any other man does. We thus had ample time to learn really to know one another. And there is now but one conviction in my mind—one impression—the British officer is a fine man! One cannot but admire and appreciate his loyalty to his Queen, his commanding officer, his regiment, his profession; nor his pluck and daring under the most trying circumstances. And yet he is kind and tender like

a woman. I have seen him with his sick and wounded comrades in hospital; I have heard him speak with deep concern of his captured men, and seen him contribute most liberally, so that the suffering soldier might obtain some comfort and food. (The officers collected amongst themselves more than £800 for this purpose.) I have been ill myself when amongst them, and experienced their kindly solicitude and care. I thus speak from experience. And I say again unhesitatingly—and I hold my opinion against all comers—the British officer is a splendid man. I do not say that he is perfect, that he never makes a mistake. No! But as a man he takes a tremendous amount of beating, and as an officer I know of no one I would follow more readily or trust more entirely. The mistakes made, as far as I could gather, must be put down as the result of a defective military system, and not as the fault of the individual. Almost invariably the captive officer was the victim of such defect, and not the originator of his misfortune.

For all this I honour the British officer. Like a brave man he spoke kindly and appreciatingly of a brave foe. There never was a word of bluster or brag. When Commandant-General Joubert died there was as genuine mourning and sympathy amongst the officers as if he had been one of their

own officers. The relatives of the great general felt this and appreciated it highly. I have heard critics who pass a different verdict on the British officer. For such I have but one answer: You have not been his fellow-prisoner for seven months; you do not know him.

How such men spent their time in prison it would be interesting to know. Let me add to what I have written before on this point.

In the Model School we had a beautifully fitted out gymnasium. In this classes practised regularly every day, whilst outside there was just room enough for a game of rounders in the afternoon. Walks round and round the building made up the balance of our physical exercise.

The new prison had larger grounds outside, so that there was room for a little cricket with empty tins for wickets and walking-sticks for bats. Many and grand were the matches we played. There was also space for a game of hockey in the afternoons, a game which afforded the onlookers more pleasure, I think, than the participators. Here, too, the walk round the yard was one of fully 600 yards, so that the exercise was a pleasurable one. In the Model School, as well as in this place, we had classes—for instance, I conducted a large Dutch class, whilst others of the officers had French classes. There

was even a law class, and I am proud to say that with the kindly and able help of Lieutenant Adv. Gallwey, of Natal, I finished Justinian's "Institutes," and did not find it dull reading at all. I am proud too of my Dutch pupils—many a one of the officers having obtained great proficiency in that language. Oh, the happy hours we thus spent in study and sport! Shall I ever forget them, or the officers, my pupils? No, my dear friends, no!

We also had a great deal of music, especially in the evening, after we were allowed to buy the organ I referred to. Some of the officers and myself provided the music, whilst the others, seated in the large dining-hall, read or studied, or wrote or played whist and chess, &c. There were moments, during such nights, when our songs, old friends of days ago, called up memories sweet and tender, memories of home and loved ones far away. In our new premises we had much less comfort than in the former ones, consequently, as far as possible, we lived outside, and the improvised tents made of blankets and large umbrellas dotted over the yard presented a scene most unique and interesting. No longer having the use of the gymnasium we formed a Sandow class for dumb-bell practice. Our instructor, a very efficient and stern one, was Lieutenant-Adjutant Hill. Some fifty of us belonged to this class, and the advantages

we derived from this exercise were inestimable. Many of the officers pursued other avocations also. You would, for instance, see one with a rod and a thread and a bent pin, patiently sitting over a hole in the ground, fishing for mice or spiders or snakes. Many a snake was caught, under tremendous excitement, but never a one by the military fisherman. The skinning of the snake and the curing of its skin afforded pastime and excitement for many a one during many a day. During the night, too, there often was excitement. An officer would dream of rats, jump up, stick in hand, ready for the fray, and kick up such a general row that the whole show was awake in no time. No rat was to be found, of course, and all went to bed again, but this time without saying good-night to one another. In fact, dire threats of vengeance were uttered on that dreamy officer should he see a rat again. Thus, with laughter and song, though these came from heavy hearts, and were but a cloak to cover our deep-felt misery and dejection, we tried to cheer one another and get the heavy wheels of Time's chariot to roll on.

Our greatest excitement, however, came towards the end of our imprisonment. We started a newspaper. Lord Rosslyn was appointed editor, several of us receiving appointments on his staff. We called our paper the *Gram*. Why ? asks the reader. For

this reason. In a former chapter I related what sources of information we had. The reader will remember the telegrams we got—the Kaffir-grams, the butcher-grams, the baker-grams, the hospital-grams, &c. This is why we called our paper the *Gram*—the name carried so many suggestions, and brought back so many pleasant memories of most exciting experiences. The production of this paper gave tremendous work to the publishers, and great excitement to the public—the prison public. We had to buy paper and hectographs, and then distribute the work amongst the assistants and thus produce the paper. The first number appeared on the 12th of May, and was really a most creditable production. The illustrations, I make bold to say, will compare favourably with the cartoons and pictures of any published paper I know. Two full numbers of the paper were published, and the third number was well in hand when the memorable 5th of June came—the day whereon Lord Roberts entered Pretoria. I am glad to say that the hard work of editor and writers will not be lost, for Lord Rosslyn intends producing a facsimile of the published numbers. The smartest bit of work in connection with our paper was this, I think, and it says a great deal for the business instincts of the officers. We made our caterer advertise in the paper. He

was the only advertiser, and we gave him a full page for the sum of £5 sterling. And the only readers of that advertisement were the prisoners of war, who knew more than enough about our caterer. The good man, however, tumbled to the idea, when we proposed it and, I trust, has thus immortalised himself.

I must not forget to refer to another pastime we had. It was the chess tournaments. Many of the officers were keen chess-players, but with the arrival of Captain Duhan we received in our midst a veritable demon of chess. He played three or four partners blindfolded, and beat them all. In fact nobody could touch him. His being so keen on the game, inspired others also, and many was the chess tournament organised and great the excitement caused.

The reader will thus see that we did not fritter away our time, nor were we lazy boys. I am sure many an officer with me during those tedious months remembered with gratitude a father and a mother who had incited us to study when we were youngsters, or a teacher and college professor who had inspired us with a love of learning. Verily, but for the literary attainments possessed by so many of us, the scholarship and love of knowledge, time would indeed have been a chain dragging us down

into the depths of despondency and hopelessness. Now we could set at defiance carping care and horrible despair. The poets and the novelists, the historians and the philosophers, all brought of their rich stores to comfort us and make us patient and strong and brave. Thus the British officer, gentleman and scholar, passed his time in prison. And I shall always account it a great privilege and an honour that for many months my lot was cast in with such men—so loyal, brave, and true.[1]

[1] Since writing the above I have been informed of an article recently written in *Scribner's* (I think) by Mr. Richard Harding Davis. I blushed for very shame when I read it—shame that a well-known writer could descend to such meanness, and tell such abominable falsehoods. The charges he brings against the British officers—prisoners of war—are absolutely false. I say this most emphatically!

LIBRARY OF THE BOMBAY BRANCH OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY.

CHAPTER XXXVII

FREE

I AM coming near to the end of my story now. On the 12th of May, at ten o'clock in the morning, our gaoler came to our quarters accompanied by two policemen, and beckoning me aside, said to me, "Would you like to change your quarters, Mr. Hofmeyr?" I answered, "I am very comfortable here, and do not know if the change you propose will be an improvement."

"Well," said he, "would you prefer going home to staying here?"

I looked at him and said, "Don't mock a man who has been a prisoner seven months. Don't speak to me of home, when I have almost begun to think that I will never see it again."

"No," said he, "I am not mocking you. You are going to be liberated to-day—now, to-day; and I

have come to pack your luggage for you and to take you out."

I felt the man was speaking the truth, and I can never forget the wistful feeling that rushed over my heart. I sat down on my little bed and verily gasped for breath. My head was in a whirl and I felt as if I could fall down. One of the officials offered me a glass of water, and in a kindly voice said, "Come, Mr. Hofmeyr, we will help you pack and take you away."

The news spread like wildfire, and in a moment my little lager, as we called it, was surrounded by the officers, every one congratulating me with the good news. And now a scene of bustle ensued—the policemen packing everything belonging to me and examining everything to prevent my taking out sealed letters and documents. Perceiving this, I really thought that now my newspaper cuttings, my manuscripts, and other trifles precious to me though obnoxious to the authorities would be taken away from me. Fortunately, through a little proper manipulation and juggling, I managed to get all my valuables safe in the pormanteau. But now came another trouble; round about me I saw on the faces of many an officer an eager look, interpreting the question, "Can you take out letters for me?" The most eager amongst these was Lord Rosslyn, whose

entreating look, as he came up to congratulate me, told me how anxious he was to get away his copy. What to do now? They planned and I planned. I managed to signal to several of the friends that they should place their letters and documents under the pillow on my bed. They did so without being noticed. And then, when the packing was over, I said to my guards, "Gentlemen, I am going on a long journey, you will allow me to change first before I start?" they kindly acquiesced, and turned their backs on me whilst I withdrew into my little red-baized recess to change. Whilst doing so I put on my football sweater, though the day was a fairly warm one. But it was done with a purpose. As I drew it over my head I slipped underneath the letters and papers under my pillow, thus finding a secure hiding-place for them between my body and the garment. I emerged rather stouter than when I entered my little sanctum, but fortunately nobody noticed it, and I escaped detection. Then up came Lord Rosslyn with a biscuit tin: "My dear Hofmeyr, do take these biscuits with you, you'll need them on the way." I hesitated at first, not suspecting the dodge. But when he so kindly pressed the gift on me, his eyes winking most mysteriously, I suspected, and most gratefully accepted the welcome present. Yes, it was a biscuit tin, but

a good deal more document than biscuit inside. But the noble lord's kind attentions did not cease there. He would re-arrange my dressing-case for me, paying particular attention to my slippers. And whilst doing so he, inadvertently of course, slipped a box of matches into one slipper! Now, no guard would object to your putting a box of matches into a portmanteau! And then my friend came to me, managing to whisper into my ear whilst others talked around me, "Look in your slipper." I caught the whisper; I understood his meaning. There were matches inside that box, but more letters and papers cleverly rolled up into the smallest space, and thus I emerged from the prison in possession of many home messages and much precious copy.

The parting on that happy though sad day I shall never forget. When all the packing and smuggling was over, we gathered in our big dining-room. In a broken voice I tried to convey my heartfelt thanks to my fellow-prisoners. They had all been so kind to me, so sympathising, that when I look back upon those months to-day, I feel I can never sufficiently value their kindness nor ever repay my fellow-prisoners what they had done unto me. I spoke a few words of goodbye, and then we shook hands. Every one had a kind word and a good wish. I could not speak any more. When the

hearty handshaking was over the officers filed out to the gate on the other side of which lay freedom. And when I emerged, the last of all, they had formed up in a double line, and in between I walked through. There was a hearty "God bless you," from every one, and as I passed through the gates a ringing chorus was raised, "For he's a jolly good fellow." I had my last look, as I turned round once more, my last wave of the hand to the friends I loved so well, and off we drove to the railway station. It was a glad day for me, and yet I felt very sad. Truly I have much reason gratefully to remember the British officers.

Having signed a declaration that I would not take up arms against the Republic, I was taken to the railway station and provided with a ticket for Delagoa Bay—a ticket and nothing more—and the journey was one of thirty-six hours. And this brings me to the relation of a most pleasing incident. I have all along said how I admire and respect the genuine burgher. Let me give an illustration confirming my belief. I was put into the train, as I mentioned, without a penny in my pocket and without food for a long journey. I sat in the corner of the carriage trying to realise that I was free, when an old burgher, whose name I do not know, passed by me, and to throw the bystanders

off the scent pretended to be in a great rage with me, speaking gruffly and harshly. But in between came this question, "Have you any money with you?" My answer was, "No." He walked away, came back again, and, speaking as before, again managed to drop the question, "Have you any food?" Again I answered, "No." The old gentleman walked up the platform, spluttered and raged, all to avert suspicion, of course, and then passed me again, very deftly dropped two sovereigns into my lap. That is just the genuine old burgher all over, and I need not say how deeply this kind deed touched me. A few acquaintances were on the platform, and after a last goodbye the train steamed away.

Let me tell of another pleasing experience. I was sent out in charge of a policeman. I may state here that Mr. Hallewell, a newspaper correspondent, was also released that day, and that we travelled together. The policeman in charge of us, in the course of conversation, found out that I was an old friend of his father, who lived in the Cape Colony. Years ago I had been able to show his father some trifling kindness, and now the son tells me that his father has always spoken of me with great gratitude and love. "And for his sake now, Mr. Hofmeyr," said the policeman, "how can I look upon you

otherwise than a friend? I am your servant, not your guard." And indeed the man was true to his word, showing me the utmost courtesy and kindness, till he left me at Komati Poort on the border. How wonderfully the bread one casts on the water sometimes comes back again! The same thing happened at Komati Poort in the Customs Office. To our surprise we heard that there too we were to be searched, and I made sure that all our manœuvring was in vain, for they would now discover everything. But what happened? When I entered the office the official behind the counter looked up and greeted me by name with a kindly smile, telling me how glad he was of my release. I apologised for not remembering him, and asked his name. "No, you won't remember me. It is so long since we met, but you will remember the little boy, R., who was your pupil twenty-five years ago in the South African College, Cape Town. You were kind to me then, and I have never forgotten it." I remembered, of course, and thanked him for his kind words, and then came up for examination. "Search you, Mr. Hofmeyr?" said my pupil of years ago. "No, certainly not!" and with that he jumped over the counter, chalked my boots, and made me pass out with all my luggage and papers. I am sure he could not under-

stand how heartily and gratefully I then thanked him for his courtesy.

Our train then crossed Komati Bridge, passed the White Beacon—the boundary between the Transvaal and Portuguese territory—and I was free. Oh, the sensations of that moment! Seven months of durance vile, months of disappointment and uncertainty, but months too full of experience and instruction and useful information—these had now passed by. I could once more go where I pleased; no guard, no gun barred the way. How blue the sky seemed, how glorious the sun, how green the fields, how sweet the running waters—for I was free! But pen cannot describe a liberated prisoner's sensations. Enough that Hallewell and I grasped one another's hands and from the bottom of our hearts said, with loud and joyful voice, "God Save the Queen!"

We reached Delagoa Bay on Sunday night the 13th, receiving great kindness from many of the English residents there, and in a few days' time sailed for Natal on the *Umbria*. I'll never forget the afternoon whereon we sailed. The big steamer was crowded with refugees from Johannesburg days before the hour of sailing. We went on board on Wednesday afternoon. It was a beautiful day, and the sea was gloriously calm. The big steamer was

riding at anchor some eight or ten miles out in the bay. Many passengers left by tug-boat that afternoon, and I, accompanied by several friends from Delagoa Bay, sailed with the last little steam tug that went out to the vessel. The few days I had spent at Delagoa Bay were to me like a dream. I had telegraphed to my fellow-prisoners in Pretoria, and written to them, and tried to realise in every way that I was free. And yet it seemed impossible. The first morning I awoke in Lorenço Marques I looked out through the window for the guards with their guns. I found them not, and it was strange to me. When you have lived seven months surrounded day and night by armed guards the change from captivity to liberty cannot be taken in all at once.

So it was with me. I was as in a dream when we sailed for the *Umbria* on the Wednesday afternoon, and I am not ashamed to say that, as our tug-boat steamed under the Union Jack, gracefully clinging in that bright afternoon to its flagstaff, my emotions overpowered me. I seized hold of my companion's arm, and as tears trickled down my face, I huskily said to him, "Thank God, I am free once more!"

CHAPTER XXXVIII

AFTERWARDS

ON Friday morning before the break of day, the *Umbria* dropped anchor in Port Natal, and soon afterwards I was on shore and amongst friends again. I need not say what a pleasure it was to hear the news, to talk over the events of the war, and to discuss matters in general. The dinner given me by the friends in the Club that evening, and the pleasant hours we spent together went far to compensate me for the trouble and trials now fortunately over. Amongst the friends I then was introduced to I cannot forget Mr. James Bailey, M.P. He and his wife had come out on a visit to the Colony, drawn thither by the fact that two of their sons were fighting for their Queen and that one had just before been made prisoner (I may here mention that the other son had also been wounded very severely). I met Mr. Bailey after-

wards again in Cape Town, and am glad to say that when I went north to the Transvaal I managed to get letters through for him to his prisoner son. On my arrival in Cape Town I was immediately and very kindly asked by his Excellency the Governor if I would like to go back to the Transvaal to assist in the work of pacification. I at once consented to this, for my heart yearned for the people who were fighting under wrong impressions, urged on by false statements. Entering the Imperial Service, I was then immediately sent to the Western Transvaal, to join General Baden-Powell. I may here state that on my arrival at Zeerust, the very place where I was imprisoned, Lord Edward Cecil, the Imperial Commissioner of the Western Transvaal, appointed me his Assistant. He very kindly soon afterwards granted me three months' leave of absence. And when these have expired I hope to resume my duties, having only one object in view—the pacification of the conquered burghers. My one hope is that under the beneficent and generous rule of England all of them may very soon be happier and more prosperous than ever before.

Before I detail any of my experiences in Zeerust, however, I would like to relate a few other incidents. The last year has been to me so full of coincidences and experiences, so full of woe as well as weal, that

I sometimes really fancy that I am dreaming. I left Natal for the Cape on the little steamer *Umvoti*. We met with exceedingly rough weather immediately after leaving on Sunday morning. Almost every passenger had fallen ill, and I was one of the few who escaped. I was sitting in the smoking-room that Sunday evening after dinner chatting with the ship's doctor. The ship was plunging and rolling madly, and we were alone. We must both of us have dozed away at about eight o'clock, I think. At nine I woke and saw the doctor, who was sitting next to me, apparently sleeping in his corner of the sofa. I dropped off to sleep, again to be rudely awakened at about 10.30 by a rush of water through the door of the smoking-room right over us. I started up, shook the salt water off my overcoat, and looked around me. The doctor was still sleeping. I wondered at this, and instinctively put out my hand to touch his. It was icy cold! He was sleeping his last sleep! With a placid smile on his face the old gentleman lay back in his corner. Never a muscle had moved, and no struggle had taken place, as his spirit passed away. I called the captain and the first officer, and gently we laid him aside, till on the following morning the body was solemnly committed to the deep. I was spared, he was taken! God knows best! Naturally this event cast a gloom

over all the passengers, a gloom that was dispelled partially only when we dropped anchor in Table Bay. There I left the vessel, and it was then that I was asked to proceed northwards again.

Passing through Kimberley, visiting the scenes of the great battles fought in its vicinity, I reached Mafeking on the 2nd of July. And here let me relate a most pleasant coincidence—let me call it the "Story of my watch." As I mentioned in the beginning of my book, it was looted from me on the day when I was made prisoner, almost eight months before. Of course I never expected to see that watch again. But what happened? While still in Cape Town I received a letter from a gentleman in Port Elizabeth, asking me for information about some of my fellow-prisoners who were friends of his. I answered him, but before my letter reached Port Elizabeth this gentleman, who was a Transvaal refugee from the district of Zeerust, had left for Mafeking, whither my letter followed him. This is the first chapter. Now for the second. I arrived at Mafeking late on Monday night, July 2nd. My good friend the host of the Mafeking Hotel informed me that his place was crowded, and that he could give me a room to myself only on the following day, if I did not object to share a room for the night with another guest.

Of course I had no objections, and my friend showed me my room. As he left me he wished me good-night, mentioning my name. My room-mate hereupon at once sat up in his bed and asked me if I were a relative or an acquaintance of Mr. Adrian Hofmeyr. I informed him that I happened to be the very man. Imagine my surprise when he then told me that he was the man who had written to me from Port Elizabeth and that my answer, forwarded to him from there, had reached Mafeking that very morning.

Of course we were at once old friends and related our experiences to one another. I told him all about my capture, mentioning what was taken from me that day, including my gold watch. Then we slept. The next morning this gentleman, who owned property in Mafeking, visited the people who were living in his house, and amongst others told them of our wonderful meeting the night before. When he mentioned my name, the lady of the house said, "But I have seen that name lately somewhere. Where can it be?" Thinking the matter over a little while it all came back to her, and this is her story. "On the day of the relief of Mafeking, when the soldiers were pursuing the Boer commando, a Kaffir boy in my husband's service picked up in the Boer lager a gold watch. The boy was a driver

of one of the gun-wagons, and in the hurry of their departure one of the Boers—very likely the one who had taken it originally—must have dropped the watch in his flight. The boy brought it to me and asked me to keep it for him. And this is how I remember the name, *it is in the watch.*" My friend came back to me about luncheon time, with a broad smile on his face, saying, "Open your hand, Mr. H., and I'll drop something into it." I did so, and the reader can imagine my surprise when once more I saw my valued watch, a present given me twenty years before, *on the 2nd of July!* I need not say that many and hearty were the congratulations, showered upon me by my friends, on this extraordinary piece of good luck.

But my good fortune did not end there. On my arrival at Zeerust the very next day, and on my telling the friends at dinner this remarkable story, Lord Edward said to me, "Extraordinary! Have you lost anything else we might find, perhaps?" Jokingly I said, "Oh yes, there is my beautiful little American organ and my music, which I would like to see back again." Lord Edward then remarked, "Well, we'll tell a detective about it to-morrow and send him out with a party to scour the country." I looked on the matter as a joke and never thought of it again. Imagine my surprise, therefore, when on the very

next evening a detective officer came to me, followed by two men carrying my little organ. His story was that he had been sent out that morning by the Commissioner to see what he could find out. He proceeded at once to a lager of tents occupied by women whose husbands were still fighting. On arrival there he made investigations and found that the occupants of the lager were meditating a big bonfire of all looted articles in the camp, for the purpose of destroying all trace thereof. The detective then searched, found my little organ intact, and thus saved it in the very nick of time. Many were the friends standing around me when I opened the box, set up the instrument and caressingly touched the keys. I need hardly say that the very first chords interpreted the tender refrain of "Auld Lang Syne." I now felt sure that some day or other I should get my music back as well. But I was not prepared for the following. Driving out in the district on official work the very next day, I came upon a deserted farm. Whilst my horses were resting I entered the house and found that one room had evidently been used as an office during the siege of Mafeking. Papers and telegrams were lying inches thick on the floor. These I turned up and read just to while away an idle half-hour. Imagine my surprise, therefore, when, on turning

over a big heap of papers in the corner, I came upon a large packet of music, and on the top corner of every song there stood my initials clear as daylight! Having found these valued articles again, I can honestly say that I regret the loss of others, infinitely more valuable, but very slightly.

My return to Zeerust, however, afforded me much greater pleasure than this even. Did it not bring me back to the friends who so generously stood by me during the dark seven weeks of my imprisonment there? Above all, did it not give me the opportunity of once again gripping the hand of my dear friend, the brave Doctor Blake? I arrived in Zeerust late in the evening, but it took me a few minutes only to run up to his house—that house that held so many touching memories—to see him and his home circle. The small hours of the morning had already come before we parted for the night, and it took us days to say merely the half of what we wanted to say to one another. Yes, it was to me indeed an inexpressible pleasure and honour once more to be the guest of my kind friends. And once more must I say, "God bless them."

I found in the Zeerust prison many Boer prisoners, and amongst them my gaoler and several of my guards. The tables were now reversed. I visited them, I asked them what I could do for them,

and gave them the luxuries they wished to have. They did not expect it, and were a little nervous about the future when they heard I had come back to Zeerust. Then I talked the matter over with Lord Edward, and we came to the conclusion that if these men would take the oath of neutrality they could be released. I saw them again, told them of this, and asked them if they were willing to take that oath. They all consented, and then heard the glorious news, "You are free." I could see that the men felt thoroughly astonished. One turning to me said, "We expected that you had come to be avenged on us for our cruel treatment of you." My answer was, "You are right. I have come for that purpose. I have taken my revenge, and it is sweet! It is this, you are free! Thus a British subject takes vengeance on his enemies. Remember that."

Aye, reader, this is what I sincerely trust the great British Empire will do all over the Transvaal and Free States—show the people that we are not their enemies but their friends. My heartfelt prayer is that England may so rule the newly conquered territories that from north to south, we all, Dutch Africanders or whoever we are, may fall in love with the grand British constitution, the shadow of whose flag spells the magic word Liberty. That time, I fervently trust, is not far distant. It will come very

soon if all her Majesty's subjects, both those in the old country and those in the South African Colonies, join hands and labour with heart and soul in the grand, the divine task, of pacification.

CHAPTER XXXIX

CONCLUSION

I HAVE been free some months now. I look back on the time of my captivity with mixed feelings. There were moments, whilst in prison, when bitter feelings of anger took possession of my heart. But they passed away very quickly. I could not but feel intense sympathy and keen sorrow for the terrible mistakes that had resulted in that frightful catastrophe for the two Republics. I have written about my experiences, and sometimes used hard words. I did so because I had to tell the truth, and because I wrote when the impressions made upon me by what I had undergone were fresh in the mind. More often I wrote with a heart full of sorrow for a misguided people, for I had learned to know how shamefully the burghers had been misled and deceived. I cannot pity the Government that caused all this. It ought

to have known better. It ought not to have allowed foreign, inimical, selfish counsels to sway its deliberations. Oh, the mistakes that were made and the chances that were lost! Now I am persuaded there is but one course to be adopted in the future—our gracious Queen must rule from the Zambezi down to the Table Mountain. And my heartfelt prayer is that the British Government may send out to rule over the country such exponents of British fair play and justice, of British rule and power, that the subjects of the newly-conquered territories, like those of her Majesty in the Cape Colony and Natal, may soon find out that after all the greatest blessing that can come over us in South Africa is to be subjects of our Empress-Queen.

South Africa is a beautiful country. Its climate is unequalled, its resources illimitable, its possibilities unfathomable. And therefore we stretch out hands across the sea and ask for the love and sympathy and the generosity of the conqueror to the conquered. Then, very soon the day will come which will make South Africa the brightest gem in the Queen's crown. Then the horrors and the sufferings of the present war will be forgotten, and from Rhodesia in the north to Cape Colony in the south, from Natal in the east to Bechuana-

land in the west, in the Vaal River and Orange River Colonies, everywhere peace and harmony and brotherhood and prosperity will reign. May that glorious morning dawn soon.

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